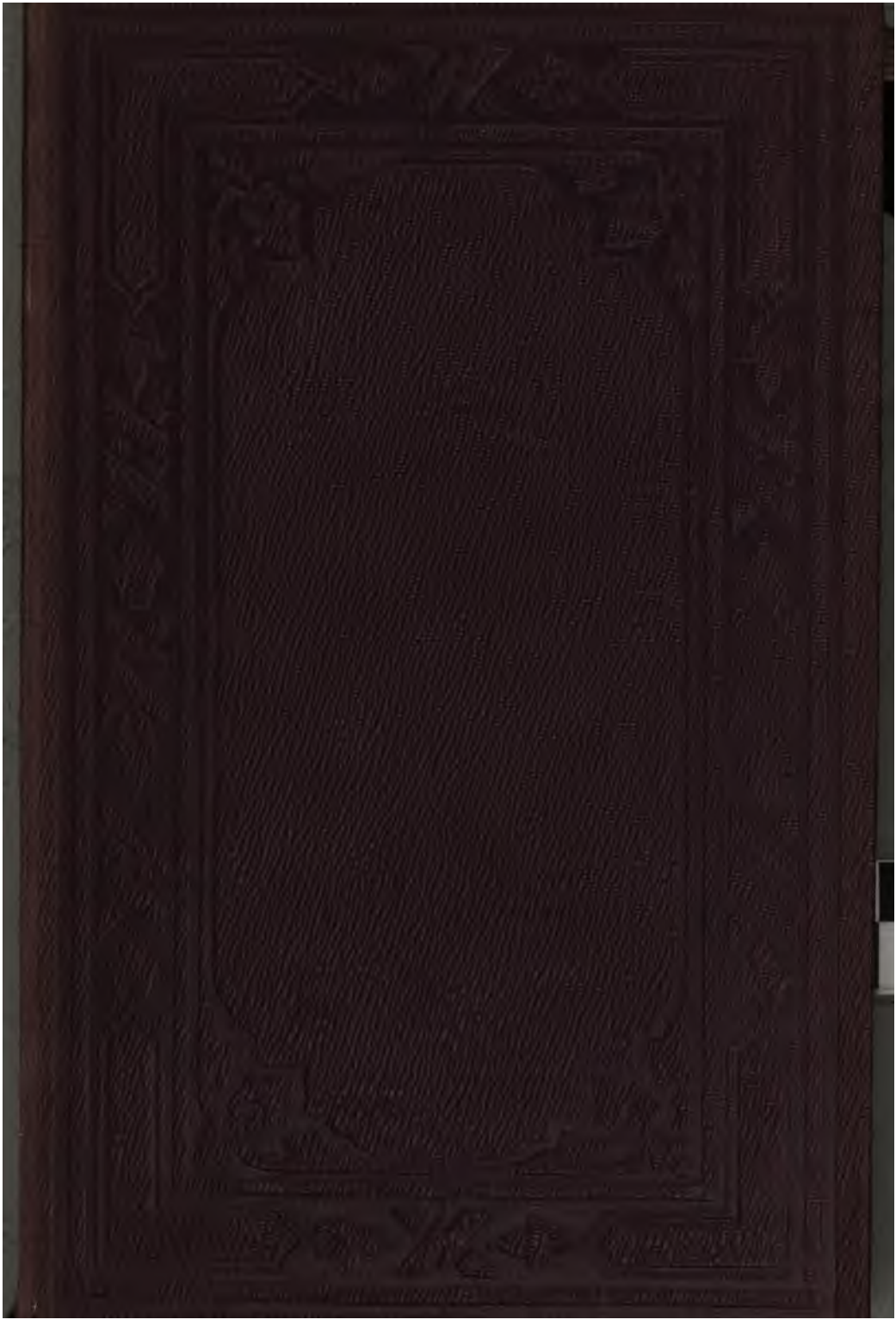


AGNES TREMORNE.

AGNES TREMORNE.

BY

I. BLAGDEN.

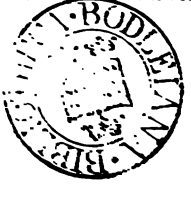
"Patient through the watches long."—BROWNING.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXI.



AGNES TREMORNE.

CHAPTER I.

THIRTY years ago Rome was not the crowded resort which it now is. Wearied matrons, listless girls, idle-looking men were not seen droning through the picture galleries, or galloping across the Campagna. The Christmas midnight mass at St. Maria Maggiore, the Easter magnificence at St. Peter's, were not then so dovetailed with the gaieties of the season, as now bestow on my fair country-women the inestimable advantage of a series of balls and festivities (extending through various localities, Paris, London, Baden Baden, Rome), throughout the year.

Rome, throned in her wilderness, was left in her melancholy majesty, alone. You might, at certain seasons, have traversed the whole city from the Porta del Popolo to the Porta San Giovanni, without meeting a single tourist, guide-book in hand, glass in eye, and money bag slung over the shoulder. A few artists came to sit at the feet of those mighty relics of the past, and anoint their eyes with Art's holy chrism. A few proud and wounded hearts came, self-exiled, to soothe their griefs with the aspect of a more desolate ruin and of a greater fall; but there were no other intruders.

Godfrey Wentworth belonged to both these classes. The sorrow which had driven him from England, yielded slowly to the strong, free artist life of Rome. Some men's eyes have received that precious ointment by which the wonders of the fairy world are unveiled to them; and to some men has it been given to see Rome as Rome should be seen. Many fortuitous circumstances bestowed this boon on Wentworth. He lived in that villa to which the frescoes of

Overbeck and Führich have given so much interest. The young German artists had not long left Rome, and Clorinda and Erminia bloomed out on the walls, in all the first freshness of their glowing tints. Now Clorinda's golden hair is all dimmed and faded, and Tancred's armour looks soiled and stained. Yet still we gaze on the tarnished frescoes. We know the pledge they gave has been nobly fulfilled.

Besides which the lovely poet-fiction they illustrate, and which lives eternally in all romantic hearts, has glorified them for ever. We should still pore over the vanishing tints, even if only seeking for the representation of the fair warrior woman and her chivalrous lover. Such is the wondrous power of poetry. Thus is it sovereign of all art—thus is it triumphant over all time!

Well said the English philosopher, "Whatever is best, is safest."

Wentworth lived almost entirely alone. From the first night he had arrived, when the diligence from Siena had deposited him in the Piazza di

Monte Citorio, and he had stepped out alone beneath those solemn skies, a weight had fallen from his heart.

He followed the porter with his luggage along the silent streets, across the Corso, the Piazza di Venezia, and through the beautiful desolation of the Campo Vaccino, till he reached the garden gate of his future home. Through a mournful alley of cypresses, he could see glimpses of the Campagna. The grassy plain was bare to the stars. Beauty, light and solitude, what can man desire more!

The door of the villa opened, and he entered a cheerful well-lighted room. Near the entrance, two or three women stood fluttering together, staring at him with the childish curiosity so peculiar to Italian females. Their cordial and musical welcome uttered, his orders were received with the most good-humoured deference, and then, in a few minutes, he was left alone with a *felicissima notte*, which echoed pleasantly through the room and in his heart.

Wentworth had suffered much. He had early

lost his parents and an elder brother. The death of a cousin put him in possession of a large estate after the death of these his nearest relatives. Earlier, this fortune would have enabled him to marry a cousin to whom he had long been attached. After two years of a tacit, though unacknowledged engagement, the young and beautiful orphan had listened to the advice of her friends, had broken with Wentworth, and married his wealthy cousin. Unfortunately such events are not unusual. In the lives of most men such an experience can be found. Wentworth was, however, of a prouder and more passionate nature than many men, and the recoil was proportionably greater. The young wife's husband died six months after her marriage. The estate was strictly entailed, the settlement on herself, if childless, very small, and with her husband she lost the worldly advantages for which she had sold herself. The world said that Godfrey had acted with unexampled generosity, for he instantly secured her a comfortable independence. He did not deceive himself: he knew that in his

heart he harboured the most vindictive dislike towards her. He would never see her again, though she went to live with an uncle, who was his uncle also, and one of the persons he most esteemed; but from the moment Millicent crossed his threshold, Godfrey Wentworth would never meet or hold communication with Mr. Marmaduke Wentworth.

After some aimless wanderings over the Continent, visiting Vienna, Germany and Switzerland, Godfrey was attracted southwards, and at length fixed upon Rome as his residence. He there conformed to the artist life around him, and adopted all its usual habits. He breakfasted at the Café Greco, and dined at Lepri's; he devoted himself to painting, lived chiefly with artists and models, and shunned general society.

His mornings were spent in study at home, or in the galleries which are the treasures of Rome. Unconsciously to himself, his spirits recovered their tone. It is a noble truth, that regret for an unworthy love is never lasting. Unless we have permanently injured the integrity of our

own souls in the indulgence of such a love, we sooner or later overcome it.

But for a somewhat cynical opinion of women, there was little trace left of the sorrow that had darkened Wentworth's youth. He despised women, but in a still greater degree distrusted himself. To have been so deceived, he argued, proved a weakness. To have grown up side by side with a false, frivolous nature, and to have imagined it was honest and profound, showed a want of penetration. To have watched the development of a mind which appeared refined, aspiring, impulsive, and to have been so betrayed, was manifest folly. How easily had the canker of worldliness destroyed the divine seed of love he had planted with such care in that soul! The fault must have been his own. If she had been frail, he must have been besotted. The shock to his self-esteem had considerably hardened Wentworth's character. Many of its softer qualities were for the moment frozen, and the moral sunshine of some true and deep affection was needed to thaw them.

Besides his artistic studies, or rather in furtherance of them, his mornings were occasionally occupied by long walks in the most characteristic parts of Rome.

About six o'clock one early spring morning he found himself in the Piazza Navona. A weekly market is held there; and any one who wishes to observe the Romans morally and physically should visit it.

Such fine-looking figures as the men (they are chiefly Transteverines), with square heads, broad brows, and athletic development of person, are seldom met with elsewhere. Their dress, too, is eminently picturesque: they wear tall, sugar-loaf hats, with usually a flower of some bright colour twisted round the cone, and goat-skin mantles, half jacket and half cloak, with leggings to correspond. The women, with their large eyes, and black hair braided back from their low foreheads and gathered into loops of plaits fastened with a silver crescent, are not inferior to the men. Beauty, in its great artistic sense, is found here. The sumptuousness of southern nature is

shown in the colouring and outline of these fine forms.

Wentworth became much interested as he mused on the strange contrasts of the place—the Babel hum and confusion, the vehement bickering and clashing for a "bajocco," the humour, the laughter, the screams, the rage, and the majestic air of the persons who thus squabbled, and who gesticulated with that freedom which gives grace to every motion, and intelligible lauguage to every gesture. Now and then he distinguished some noble head, with that superb carriage of the neck and shoulders which Gibson has made familiar to us in his bust of "Grazia;" but the universal characteristic was a brightness and animation of countenance peculiarly southern. With us of the north there is nothing like it.

"At all events," thought Wentworth to himself, "this is more amusing than the monotony of an English drawing-room, and not offensive like the tame and sordid vulgarity of an English market-place. These men and women are not

many degrees superior to the brutes; but whatever they are, their characters are perceptible and palpable, as it were. The fierceness of the inner nature looks out of the eyes; the mirth of the heart is told in that broad smile. He who runs may read. There is individuality, there is genuineness here. With us, who can judge what lies beneath those insipid, well-bred masks, all tamed down to an uninteresting similarity, character and strength seem carefully ironed out of our faces, and in these smooth polished surfaces all distinctions of aspect are lost. In men, perhaps, this is less remarkable: their professions, their studies, the vicissitudes of their lives, may undo this uniformity in some; but English girls and women are but countless copies of the same conventional type. White muslin in girlhood, black velvet in matronhood; so are the editions universally bound. I defy the most lynx-eyed observer to distinguish one copy from another."

In the midst of this mental soliloquy (which I beg leave not to endorse), a sudden movement of the vociferating crowd obliged Wentworth to

move. There was a quarrel between the proprietors of two hand-barrows, and the populace were pressing round.

He moved aside and ascended the steps of the Church of St. Agnese, near which he was standing. From thence he could look down on the Piazza, and, as it were, command the crowd. He could not help admiring the spectacle it presented: there was enough of lawlessness in his own instincts to sympathize with that turbulent mass.

Low down in the inner depths of many of us there lurks a tiger nature, and however firmly chained up in ourselves, it somewhat exults in the freer manifestation of its kindred beast which abides in our fellows. Is not this the secret of the acts of brutality done by crowds? Individually, each would blame any violence; but, from the magnetism which pervades masses, it becomes inevitable when they are once excited.

At the corner of the steps of the church was a cart, to which were yoked two of the noble milk-

white oxen of the Campagna. The cart was a very rude and primitive construction. The oxen were magnificent, and all decked with parti-coloured knots and tassels. On each side of their stately heads they wore huge tufts of flowers. Their eyes, with the thick fringe, which imparts to them such a lazy softness, were fixed in serene observance of the tumult around them. It seemed a sacrificial chariot; and the tall man who leaned beside them with the goad in his hand, might have belonged to the time of the Roman republic. He looked as stolid, as fierce, as inflexible as any of the plebeians who vexed the soul and fretted the patience of Coriolanus. It was a bit of heathendom. But behind Wentworth, through the occasionally lifted curtain, as the devotees hurried in to early mass, the dark old church was seen; a few tapers dimly gleamed before the high altar, and the murmur of prayer was heard through some pause in the noise below: this at once brought back the mediæval period. In both, Rome triumphant; and belonging to both, memories immortal!

As Wentworth looked up from contemplating

the scene which had so interested him, he became aware, for the first time, that he was not alone on the steps. A few paces to the right, a female figure sat on the last step busily engaged in painting the cart and oxen below. Beside her, thrown loosely down, were some beautiful spring flowers. The bonnet—quasi-hat, for it seemed a very doubtful kind of head-gear—prevented the face from being visible, and the figure was still further disguised by a long loose cloak, of some woollen material and dark colour. But the carriage of the head was erect, and the line of the shoulders seemed graceful. Wentworth would not have had his attention roused, but for one circumstance—the absorption in her occupation: it was entire. She seemed unconscious of time and place, and deaf to every sound. Thus absorbed and calm, she continued for awhile, and Wentworth involuntarily lingered, looking at her. While doing so, he noticed that a man accompanied by a little boy detached themselves from the crowd below and ascended the steps of the church. The child, who was apparently about

seven years old, was a lovely boy. He was dressed with care, and with that peculiarity which betrayed at once to Wentworth, that his parents utilized his personal gifts by allowing the artists of Rome to use him as a model. His cherub face and glittering curls might be seen on many a canvas, as an angel, an infant Samuel, or child Jesus.

Wentworth stopped the two as they were passing into the porch of the church, and spoke to the man. He found that his conjectures were right: the child was a model. He invited him to come to his studio that very morning.

"He is engaged," replied the father.

"Yes," said the child, with a delighted look, "at ten o'clock I am going to the Signora Agnese; that is why I must get my palm to-day: my *palma benedetta,* for I am going to take it to her. Signor Carlo said, I was to give it to her."

"Could he come to me in an hour, about eight o'clock?" asked Wentworth.

"Where is your studio, Eccelenza?"

"In Via Gregoriana."

"Yes, very well; if you will allow him to rest before he goes away. His mother will go with him, and can take him from your house to Via di S. Onofrio."

The child, meanwhile, had darted into the church, and before the dialogue between his father and Wentworth was over, had come out, with one of the palms which are given on Palm Sunday in his hand.

He showed it with eager delight to his father. The two then took leave of Wentworth, and were about descending the steps, when they also became aware of the lady who sat sketching there.

With a bound the child was at her side.

"Signora Agnese, here is my palm."

She turned round and, for the first time, Wentworth saw her face. It was not pretty, and not very young. There was an indefinable expression in it, however, which struck him. It was serious, but not sad. There was no mask here, yet at first sight the predominant expres-

sion of the mouth, which wore a sweetness without smiles, and in the pale and steadfast eyes, were not intelligible.

She seemed to speak kindly and caressingly to the child, but the voice was too low for her words to be audible. The little boy pressed the palm on her; this she at first declined, but accepted it at last, exchanging for it the flowers beside her, which she gave him, with the exception of one tall, fair lily. He kissed her hand, and with an "*A rivederla,*" left her. She then rose, folded up her sketch-book, and closed her paint-box, and descended into the piazza. Wentworth watched, as far as he could, the slender figure bearing the palm and lily, and sought to analyze the expression of the face. Not till he had also bent his steps homewards, could he do so to his own satisfaction; it was in such utter contrast to the confusion around. It opened up a new course of entirely opposing reflections as he mused on it.

"Purity and fortitude," he murmured, at last, as he crossed the furthermost end of the square,

and looked back on the old majestic church, where the flame of the morning sun shone on the letters which told the faithful it was dedicated to St. Agnes, virgin and martyr!

CHAPTER II.

THE lady whom Wentworth had been observing with so much attention, took her way along the piazza, and, with a motion so smooth and calm that its rapidity was scarcely perceptible, threaded her way through the narrow, dark streets behind St. Peter's, and ascended that steep, miserable one which leads to the church of San Onofrio. She entered one of the houses, and rang a bell on the third floor of the only large house in the street.

A woman-servant, of a neater and more homely aspect than an Italian domestic usually wears, opened the door.

"Is she awake, Mary?"

"No, my dear."

"Then I will go into the studio till you call me."

The servant opened a door at the farther end of the ante-room and disappeared. The lady turned to the right, across the little passage, and entered a room fitted up as a studio. On a large easel was a picture half finished, and pinned to the grey and bare walls were innumerable sketches and studies. All the chairs but one in front of the easel were covered with portfolios, and in a corner was a lay figure dressed in the costume of an Albano peasant.

The lady took off her bonnet and cloak, and sitting down before the picture, commenced painting assiduously. Her figure, now entirely seen in a close, high dress, was very slight and tall; the face pale and fair. There was distinction and refinement in it, but no beauty. A deep line between the eyebrows gave an appearance of thought and age. The lips were finely curved, and closed firmly, and the jaws had a squareness of outline; but the face was almost too rigid and colourless to admit of much

variety of expression. The eyes were of a soft sea blue, with brown lashes and brows, and the deep shadows round them made them seem much larger than they really were. The transparent skin of the round temple was intersected with violet-coloured veins; a sure sign of great delicacy of health, or of considerable fatigue, either physical or mental: perchance of both. The hair was very light, but not insipidly so; there was a glow of colour through it which made it look golden in some lights, and in all gave it a brightness very different from the deadly prettiness of ordinary flaxen. Its great abundance and length were revealed in the massive coils in which it was wound round the small head: a simple but not unbecoming mode, for its natural tendency to curl rebelled against the tight fastenings, and it set in waves round the forehead. To those who observe closely, that kind of hair is the usual index of a strong will and of a resolute individuality.

She sat painting very steadily and industriously, but apparently with wandering attention, as if

she were listening for some summons. As the clock struck eleven there was a ring at the outer bell, and then a knock at the studio door.

"Is it you, Giacinto? Come in."

"I beg your pardon," said a man's voice, speaking such unmistakeable Anglo-Italian, that the lady instantly answered in English to the question, "Are you the Signora Agnese?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry to be the bearer of ill tidings, but your little model Giacinto has met with an accident."

The speaker had continued in English, evidently greatly relieved.

"Can I be of any use?" asked the lady, rising instantly.

"No, it is nothing, a sprained ancle; he must not walk or stand for a week or two."

"Poor child! You are sure it is no worse?"

"No: he was running down stairs from my studio, when his foot slipped on something or other, and he fell with some violence. He was a little stunned at the moment; but on taking

him home, the only thing which seemed to concern him was that he should miss his appointment with you."

"I am so sorry!"

"The leg is a little grazed and the ancle bruised, but in a fortnight, at farthest, he will be well. To pacify him, for he was sobbing most piteously (his mother could not leave him, and his father was out), I came to tell you that you might not wait for him."

"You are very kind: I am sorry you should have had the trouble. I will not detain you. Good morning," and Mr. Wentworth, for it was he, found himself most civilly bowed out by the Signora Agnese. As he left the room, the tingle of a bell roused the silence of the house. The lady rose hastily, put aside her drawing materials, and had just moved the picture from the easel, when the servant who had opened the door to her entered the room hastily.

"Make haste, dear; she has called you twice."

"In a minute: unfasten this string."

But the hasty hands knotted it instead of unfastening it, and this caused a few minutes' delay; it was untied at last, however, and the lady loosened her dark dress and took it off. Beneath was a white embroidered muslin dress of somewhat old-fashioned style, but richly trimmed with lace.

She closed and fastened the door of the studio, and was following the servant's hasty steps across the ante-room, when the outer door was pushed open — it had evidently not been properly fastened—and Wentworth again stood before her.

"Pray excuse me; but I had forgotten the principal part of my commission. Giacinto told me that it was of consequence to you to get your picture finished in a day or two. I have just made some studies of him in the same attitude, will they be of any use to you?"

"Thank you, but ——"

"Pray let me bring them to you."

"No, I think I can finish my study of him from memory."

"At all events, if you do not make use of them, you can see them and judge for yourself whether they can assist you: I will send them to-morrow."

Again the little bell was heard.

"Excuse me, I am wanted; I will go and see Giacinto to-morrow evening: you can send them to me there," and with the noiseless rapidity peculiar to her, the white dress vanished through the opposite door.

There was a slight frown on Wentworth's brow as he turned away. On looking up to move to the door, he saw the servant watching him with a strangely sad and wistful look: her lips seemed to tremble with some request which she had not courage to make. However, she slowly advanced to the door to open it, and then making a desperate effort, with hand on the bolt, she said,—

"You are English, sir?"

"Yes."

"Thank God!"

Wentworth smiled.

"You do not know what it is," said the woman, "to have lived for so long as I have in this place without hearing one's own native tongue, or you would understand what has made me so bold as to speak to you, sir, stranger as you are!"

It must have been a strong temptation; for here was a most primly English maid-servant of the better sort—that incarnation of all proprieties—talking almost confidentially to a perfect stranger, and absolutely about to ask him a favour.

"Would you be so kind, sir, as to tell me where Giacinto lives?"

"In the Vicolo dei Zuchelli."

"Is it very far from here?"

"Yes, it is a long walk; quite on the other side of Rome."

She seemed in despair at this reply.

"Heaven forgive me," she said, "if I am doing wrong, but I am well nigh beside myself with fear and anxiety. If anything were to happen to her or to us while she is away—but it makes me crazy to think of it: if not far from where

you live, will you take your drawings to her yourself, and not send them? I shall feel then she is not without protection. They are an awful set, sir, those relations of Giacinto's. She has never, as yet, been in any of their dens; for they are dens, where the poor people live in this place, sir: if I could only be sure she left them safely——"

"What is your mistress's name?"

The woman blushed.

"She is always called here, the Signora Agnese: excuse me, sir, you do not know how beset I am on every side; but when I heard you speak English to my mistress—the first time I have heard any one but ourselves speak it since I have been here, now going on for three years—my heart seemed to take hope again: besides, you seem different in everything from any one I have ever seen since we came here; but I am keeping you, sir, and I am wanted myself. You will promise to take the drawings?"

"Do not distress yourself, I will take the draw-

ings; and if she will allow me, I will walk home with her, at least part of the way."

"No, no, you must not even offer to do it; and if you see her safe out of that low place, I do not so much care. She is used to walk about alone, and sometimes late, I am sorry to say; when I think of what folks would say at the Grange, if they only knew it—but it is no use thinking now," and the tears fell down her cheeks as she clasped her hands nervously together.

Wentworth was moved: in her manner there was such unfeigned disturbance mixed with honest shame in thus breaking from her habitual reserve, that he involuntarily felt a respect for the woman. He nodded kindly to her and smiled as he reiterated his promise. She held the door open for him to pass, and watched him downstairs.

"Miss Agnes would say I had been gossiping; but she would tremble as I do, if she knew what these people are: but she is as innocent as a babe, poor dear."

When Wentworth reached home, he was not in the mood to sit alone. He felt he must change the tenor of his thoughts. He found himself thinking, more than he wished, of that studio and its pale inhabitant. "Is she artist or actress, or both?" he asked himself. In the hasty glance he had given round her studio, he had seen unmistakable evidences of something more than mere industry; there was the stamp of genius.

No man valued individuality more than Wentworth, and a woman who led an independent life, devoted to the pursuit of art, was then so much rarer than it is now, that he was struck and interested. He did not feel disposed to sit down for long at his daily task, and put on his hat to walk in the direction of the Barberini Palace. There was something in that picture of Titian's which is called La Schiava, that was recalled to him by the paler, thinner features of the Signora Agnese. He could not have explained how or why. Except the living glory of the hair, and the shape of the forehead and

eyes, there was no absolute likeness; but the two faces in their likeness and unlikeness rose before him, and he thought he would go to examine the picture and compare the living woman with the portrait.

A few paces from his own house he heard his name called, and a carriage drew up beside him.

"Dear Mr. Wentworth, how glad we are to have met you! You have taken no notice of us since our arrival; with which we, however, took care to acquaint you."

"Excuse me; but I rarely visit anywhere during the day, and never at night, or in the evening."

"What a hermit! But for the sake of 'auld lang syne' come to us this evening. It is not a party; only a few friends: and I keep my strongest inducement to the last—aunt May is with us, and will be so glad, I know, to see you."

"Is she with you?"

"Yes. Will you come?"

"Yes. I will be with you at nine."

"*Au revoir,* then." Wentworth bowed, and the carriage drove off.

Its occupants were country neighbours of his. As a boy he had known the sons, and as a youth he had flirted with the daughters. They knew his uncle, and were very intimate with Millicent Wentworth, his first love. All the Carmichaels were in love with the estate of Ribstone. Its late proprietor, Mr. John Wentworth, had been the object of their admiring attentions till his marriage; then a slight coolness had interrupted the acquaintance: Mrs. Carmichael had long expected he would choose one of her daughters as a bride.

After a time, however, he and his wife were restored to favour, and a yet closer intimacy was struck up; fostered and cemented by the feminine sympathies of dress, and visiting between the beautiful Mrs. Wentworth and the plainer Misses Carmichael. At his death, there was a transfer of the family affections to his cousin and heir, who had long been known to them. This cousin was not much older than Godfrey,

and had been his guardian's son. Until the marriage, Ribstone had been Wentworth's home. He was liked by all; but now he was more than liked, for there was a vacant wife-ship in his gift: though as he had been lately almost continually abroad, they had not seen him since the estate had become his. Mrs. Carmichael had two unmarried daughters, and was naturally anxious to provide them with husbands; but, as she whispered confidentially to her friends, every year men seemed less disposed to marry. Poor lady, the supply was beginning to exceed the demand: English drawing-rooms were beginning to be overstocked with marriageable English daughters; and Englishmen, even then, had begun to fly to the uttermost parts of the earth for wives, rather than go through the *peine forte et dure* of the season.

The elder Miss Carmichael was a fac-simile of hundreds of her sex and condition. Beauty she had never possessed, bloom had long faded, pleasure had palled, and yet she continued the same dull round of parties, balls and dinners, which

are the allotted occupation of so many. She dressed as every one else did, she thought as it was conventional to think, she talked as all talked. There was an under-current of bitterness proceeding from disappointment; but she was too well bred to let it generally be seen, and she had therefore the negative reputation of being quiet and good-natured.

Her sister was more remarkable in every way. She was rather handsome, though somewhat faded, and very jealous of younger beauties. She would commence by acknowledging their beauty, and then pull it to pieces, with such disparaging, yet apt criticism, that she usually succeeded in affixing some ineffaceable stigma. She was clever, and her predilections were of the artistic kind: she sketched, and took crayon likenesses, and it was even whispered, wrote poetry. She was enthusiastic for certain artists who had bought her good graces by finishing her pictures for her, or giving her theirs, and decried others who had failed in these duties. She also distinguished herself by her intense enthusiasm for

Italy and Italians, in contradiction to the Anglomania of her sister.

A sister of the late Mr. Carmichael's, a great invalid, resided with them, and her health was the plea given for their passing the winter in Rome; though in reality the journey had been undertaken in the forlorn hope that husbands might be evoked out of some gallery, or studio, or picnic, or amidst the chances and vicissitudes of hotel experiences. This was the family who welcomed Wentworth in their beautiful apartment in the Piazza di Spagna.

The room was crowded, and but for the softer feeling in the air, the loftier, larger and less furnished rooms, one might have been in London. Wherever a knot of men stood together, the news of *The Times* were discussed as warmly as on the very spot where it is published. A little French might be heard spoken to some Italians who were there, but no other foreign language was heard. It must have struck a casual observer, how entirely the English strangers who come to Italy are separated in thought and

feeling from the Italians; how completely they take England abroad with them, and how little they sympathize with the people among whom they are. Wentworth, who abhorred general society, had scarcely passed the threshold of the door, before he felt an inclination to escape; but that was impossible. He tried to remain quietly by Mrs. Carmichael, but fell a prey to her eldest daughter.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Wentworth. It is so delightful to see some one fresh from England."

"I am sorry to resign my claim of being welcomed by you; but I have been out of England some years, as you know."

"We have tried to find you out since we have been here, for we heard you were in Rome; but it seemed almost impossible. What makes you bury yourself in this way?"

"I do not call it burying myself."

"I only wish I could do the same," interrupted the second Miss Carmichael, "and do, as I suppose you do, devote myself to art. Oh, Rome,

my country, city of the soul!—but I forget, you never were enthusiastic."

It was true that Wentworth's countenance at that moment looked cold and stern to an unusual degree. The lip ardour, which a certain class of women manifest, was supremely offensive to him.

"Imagine my disappointment, Mr. Wentworth, when I came to Rome, particularly and for the express purpose of taking lessons in painting, that I have not been able to do so."

Wentworth politely looked surprised.

"The artists I should like to learn of do not leave their studios to give lessons, and mamma will not hear of my going *to* their studios. I have been in despair till this morning, when my eye was attracted by a small landscape in the Via Condotti. It is an English landscape, and an old looking Elizabethan Hall is seen through the trees, most cleverly painted. I bought it, and the picture-dealer told me it was painted by a Signora Agnese. On further inquiry he said he did not think it improbable

she might be able to give me lessons at home. Look at it." She showed him a small picture painted with the freedom and power which had so struck Wentworth that very morning.

"Admirable!" he said.

"Have you ever heard of her?"

"Yes, I have."

"Do you think it would answer? Is she a lady?"

Wentworth's lip curled. The comparison between the manner and appearance of the person speaking, and the one spoken of, was too vivid.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Do you think, from what you know of my style of painting and hers, that I should derive benefit from her instructions? And is she a person one could admit into our house? Artists are a strange rough set: I mean the men, here. They are quite different from the sober drawing masters one knows in England; and there may be as much difference in the women artists."

"The Signora Agnese is one of the most distin-

guished looking persons I have ever seen," said Wentworth, with involuntary respect.

It is strange what a sudden leap Miss Carmichael's thoughts took, after that answer.

"Is she handsome?"

"Not what is generally termed handsome: I think her so."

"We have inquired a little about her, and what we heard struck me as not very favourable, and has made me hesitate."

"What have you heard?"

"That she lives alone, walks about alone, and is thoroughly independent of all conventionalities. The only persons who seem to know her, are some models, and you know what a set they are."

"Well?" Wentworth's voice had a tone of sarcasm in it which did not escape his auditor. She blushed.

"No one is more enthusiastic about art than I am, but pursued in a feminine way."

"And how would that be? learning to draw without models? to model without a knowledge of anatomy? to paint without understanding the

effects of light and shade? If so, I am afraid I shall be tempted to say, Defend me from feminine art."

"You are very severe!" said Miss Carmichael.

"Laura," called out a voice at that moment, and Miss Carmichael rose and went to the other end of the room. Wentworth followed her, for he, too, had recognized the voice. It was that of a small pale woman, who lay on a couch by the window, her head supported by pillows. It was aunt May.

"I am so glad to see you!" she said, and held out both hands to Wentworth.

"I need not say how glad I am: you were always so good to me," and he drew a low seat by her side.

"What were you and Laura talking about? I caught a name which interested me. I have been watching you for some time. You are altered, Godfrey," and she sighed.

"We were speaking of a Signora Agnese, of whom I have been thinking I shall take lessons."

"Agnese," murmured aunt May, in a dreamy voice.

"I was telling Mr. Wentworth, that I had been prejudiced against her."

"Why?"

"Because," broke in Wentworth, "she lives alone, walks alone, and paints in a way most of us men would envy. As I said before, Miss Carmichael was not good-natured."

"Really, Mr. Wentworth, you speak with so much warmth that one would think——"

"Be good enough to continue," his eyes flashed.

"That you were in love with the Signora Agnese."

"Commend me to the logical inferences of women." His laugh was not pleasant.

"But in nothing that you have said can I find the least cause for prejudice. Solitude, independence and excellence in her art, are all that you have stated, Laura. The first is not probably her own fault: God does not bless all with family ties; the second is a consequence of the first, and is obligatory on all who wish to earn a

living for themselves; the last is surely a great merit."

"In my opinion," added Wentworth, "a woman who escapes from the slough of amateurship, and pursues art broadly and thoroughly, should be canonized."

"You are very warm in her defence."

"In her defence!" Again Wentworth's lip curled, but this time she escaped. The conversation was taking a turn she did not like: praise of another woman. He turned to aunt May. "Do you stay with them always?"

"No, I have my own rooms; but I heard you were coming, and was brought down."

"Are you better?"

"About the same; a warmer climate was recommended for the winter, and we came here: it is pleasant for all. But who is this Signora Agnese? I am interested in her from her name, which I heard long ago in a most eventful time of my life; and this picture is of a place I fancy I have heard of."

"I really know nothing of her, but that

she is a very clever artist. I have seen her once."

"I must try and see her, if Laura should take lessons of her. Come and see me sometimes. I will receive you in my own room."

"Thank you. You know I shall be so glad to come."

"We will talk as in olden times. Do you know, Godfrey, that your uncle and Millicent are coming?"

"No; are you sure?" and Wentworth's face flushed.

"Yes, I believe so. It ought to be nothing to you."

"It is nothing. Good bye."

He wrung her hand affectionately, and left her. In his movement to the door, he got blocked up by some Englishmen, who were talking of Italy with that dogmatic ignorance which is so peculiar to us. They spoke of the mental and moral stagnation of the country; that all nations had a rise and fall, and that none ever emerged from second barbarism. Ancient history was

quoted in support of these facts, and the present and future state of Italy was settled beyond controversy; but with only one drawback it was entirely founded on false premises.

Wentworth had studied the subject and known several of the most celebrated Italian liberals. His most intimate friend, Herbert Tremorne, had been, or was at that very moment, a prisoner in Spielberg.

He had looked closely at the game which was being played. The celebrated letter to Charles Albert had just appeared. He spoke; but those to whom he spoke had evidently made up their minds on the subject, and would neither be convinced nor listen. One of them, a specimen of that obnoxious class of Englishmen who travel as if to show the world what odious specimens there are of that race which also can hold up the grandest examples of refinement and distinction the genus man has ever known, was particularly severe on the cause. He was a dark little saturnine-looking man, an incarnation of bile; and his knowledge of human nature was

taken from the offices of second-rate diplomatists, or the boudoirs of the *demi monde.* He was an embodiment of insular prejudice and insular narrowness of vision. He pronounced both classes, the oppressors and oppressed, "ruffians." On an allusion being made to the awakening of Italy which was caused by the cannons of Lodi, he spoke in a tone of polished irony of that "scoundrel Napoleon;" and from the pinnacle of his self-esteem looked down with scorn on the throes of that nation which was groaning and travailing in fierce pain to bring forth freedom. Wentworth was, however, more than his match, and the argument was most animated. One of the Italians who was present, and who seemed to understand English, listened attentively. On his dark, impassive countenance, there could be read neither approbation nor disapprobation of the sentiments of the speakers, until Wentworth joined in, and then a glow came into his face; but that was all. He looked steadfastly at him as he spoke, but did not even ask who the speaker was.

Soon afterwards, Wentworth made his escape.

As he was taking leave, Miss Laura Carmichael came up to him.

"I have made up my mind to take lessons of the Signora Agnese."

Wentworth bowed, but made no reply.

CHAPTER III.

TRUE to his word, it was striking the Ave Maria as Wentworth turned the corner of Via Felice into Vicolo Zucchelli.

He did not know Giacinto's abode, but the entrance, as usual in all Roman houses, was partly open, and through it he could see the little narrow room which was the child's home. There was no door, but a woollen curtain usually masked the aperture. It was drawn aside now. On the bed lay Giacinto. Beside him at the head of the bed sat the Signora Agnese, and the rest of the room was full of women gazing with wonder, not unmixed with awe, on the foreign lady. A brass lamp was near the bed, but the room wanted no artificial light, the moon-

light was flooding in through the close barred windows, and illuminating every corner of the den.

The Signora was talking in whispers to the little boy. The influence of her quiet manner seemed infectious, for the women in the room, though they all spoke together if she asked any question, whispered among themselves. At last she rose.

"I will leave you these two picture books, Caro, to amuse you; but you must be sure to keep yourself quiet and not move your poor foot. I will go now, for you should sleep."

"When will you come again, Signora?"

"In two days."

The lady stooped down and kissed the child, who retained her hand, and covered it with kisses.

The passionate ardour of this affection brought a smile to the calm face which leaned over him, and as she kissed again the crimson cheek, Agnes said,—

"You must not excite yourself, Giacinto: be good and obedient, as I love you to be."

She then rose and gave some directions to his mother.

This woman had been a model, and there were traces of a fierce beauty in her prematurely faded countenance. No women lose their beauty so soon as the Romans: the relentless climate parches as rapidly as it matures. She had those steady, unflinching, passionless eyes, with a gleam of latent savageness in their depths, which are peculiar to the Transteverines. There were scars on her arms and on her breast, which told of dagger strokes. She was that kind of woman for whom the love of man expresses itself by a caress or a blow. Those she had betrayed had become thirsty of her blood, as man is of a creature that has stung him. She had shown these scars to Agnes, and spoke with fury of the different occasions in which she had received them.

"By the Santissima Madonna," she said, "I will revenge myself on all these men some day, or kill myself."

And she looked capable of carrying out her threat. Utter contempt of life is a great peculiarity in these southern natures; and yet to them, life offers far more abundant enjoyments than to any others. She had a kind of animal love for her boy, and a sordid appreciation of his beauty, which earned the few comforts of her miserable home. Her husband's professional earnings in the same line, she of course never shared.

The most entire observance of all Agnes' directions was promised. That class of people among Italians will promise anything, and perform what they please; and should any one expostulate afterwards, they immediately explain the non-fulfilment of their promise, by having recourse to the all expressive "Chè," and proceed to assure the remonstrant that the promise was *per contentarla*, and for nothing else.

Wentworth observing she was leaving would not enter, but walked on a few paces in expectation of her overtaking him. As he did

so, a man passed him hastily. He had a half-jaunty, half-slovenly air, and was young and handsome. It was the father of the sick child. He met the signora as she was stepping into the street.

"Ah! Egidio, is it you? Your little boy is less hurt than I fancied."

"A thousand thanks, Signora: I hope it will be all right soon; but I wanted to see you, and——"

"What is it?"

"Can you come to-morrow evening?"

"Where?"

"This is the address."

"At what hour?"

"Six o'clock: will you come?"

"Without fail."

"Signor Carlo wished to see you to-day if he could; but it was too late to make an appointment, he said, though he would try to meet you."

"*A domani*, then."

"*A rivederla.*"

"Keep Giacinto as quiet as possible, and he will be soon well."

The lady walked on, and Wentworth, who had witnessed though he could not hear the short dialogue which had passed between the two, saw the man standing for a few minutes looking after her, and then, with a gesture of menace at the retreating figure, enter his own house. The woman hastened to give her husband the particulars of the Signora's visit. Giacinto's eyes, brighter than usual from fever, sparkled as he showed his father the picture books. The child's love for the pale English lady, was one of those strange exclusive feelings which sometimes are felt by young children. The sweetness, the serenity of Agnes' personal appearance and manners, was so different from all the child saw and felt around him, that she was worshipped by him as a being from a superior sphere.

All children instinctively appreciate grace, and turn towards it, as flowers to the light; and these children of the south, through their mobile and

sensuous organizations, are peculiarly open to such influences. Bright colours in their dress, the smell of a flower, the trickle of a fountain, are exquisite pleasures to a Roman child. Natural beauty is the element in which they live. That which is grotesque or ridiculous is unsparingly criticized, mimicked and condemned by them, while all that is picturesque and graceful receives their instant acceptance and appreciation.

It would have been natural for Wentworth to have given the roll of drawings as soon as the Signora had overtaken him. She was apparently absorbed in thought, and passed him without recognizing him. He cautiously followed her, resolved to delay as long as possible addressing her, for by so doing he could the more easily fulfil his promise to the poor woman in the Via Sant Onofrio. Besides which, Wentworth was too proud not to be, man of the world as he was, somewhat shy. Proud and shy men have always a keen sense of the ridiculous. He felt there was something ridiculous in this self-

appointed guardianship of a woman unknown, and who appeared so perfectly indifferent herself to the probability of any danger.

On the morning of the previous day he had risen ignorant of the very existence of this person; yet he had obliged her, he had defended her character, and was now watching her steps, ready to offer aid or protection in case of need. He was humane, but not what is generally termed goodnatured. In assenting to Giacinto's earnest entreaties that some one should go to the Signora Agnese, he had been touched by the child's unselfish concern at having missed his engagement, which predominated over all his own suffering from the fall. The identity of the Signora Agnese with the lady whose countenance had struck him that morning in the Piazza Navona, had pleased and interested him. Beyond this, there was a kind of family resemblance in her countenance to the face of a dear friend with whom he had become very intimate in Germany. It was the resemblance which had excited the interest he thought. At all

events, it mattered little how or why, that magnetic chain which binds us, more or less, to our fellow-creatures before we can be placed *en rapport* with them, had vibrated.

Volumes might be written on these mysterious affinities, and on the fatal yet subtle influence one human being is destined to exercise over another, and which the most casual and unforeseen circumstances may evoke.

We enter a room full of strangers, without any apparent volition of our own, and our attention is attracted by one among the mass; from that moment of involuntarily election, how many have sealed the happiness or misery of a life.

Wentworth, as he followed the lady's rapid footsteps through the alternate light and shadow of the almost deserted streets of Rome, thought of these things. A mysterious presentiment, which he could not shake off, gave him a superstitious feeling of impending evil. "A vague faint augury" of sorrow, which had an indefinable sweetness blended with it.

As he endeavoured to conquer this folly, as he termed it, he saw that a young man had, after pausing for a moment or two, joined the lady, who, instead of continuing her route, turned back, and was now walking up and down the Via Tor di Nona with him. This person had the air of a gentleman, and the conversation seemed earnest and animated. This apparition seemed to dissolve the spell. Wentworth felt he had amply fulfilled his promise. He did not like, however, to interrupt the two speakers. He could have laughed at himself for supposing there could be any further connection between him and that shrouded and cloaked figure. He hurried on, for they were not far from the Via Sant Onofrio, and he now preferred leaving the drawings at the house, rather than enter into any further communication with her.

He rung the bell of the third story, and gave a roll of drawings to the servant who opened it, after having kept him waiting for some time.

"And my mistress?"

"She will be here in a moment: here she is."

He drew aside to let her pass, bowed, and noticed, as she raised her veil on entering, that she looked as white as a ghost; he then descended the stairs. A woman who could walk at that hour and meet, apparently by appointment, a man, whom Wentworth thought he recognized as a certain Signor Carlo Moroni, one of the most profligate and dissipated men in Rome, had lost all claim on his sympathy and interest. So at least he argued with himself, as he hastened homewards with a sense of injury and feelings of scorn quite disproportionate to the occasion.

"Dear Miss Agnes, how late you are!"

"Am I, Mary?"

"Are you tired? come and rest. She is asleep, and may not want you again to-night."

This dialogue had taken place as the two walked through the studio into the room, half bed-room half sitting-room, beyond.

"The gentleman who was here this morning

about Giacinto, brought these drawings for you."

"Thank you."

"What is the matter? I have never seen you look so tired; you are quite worn out: what *is* the matter?—have you had——bad news?"

"Such news! Oh, nurse, I fear, I have every reason to fear that Herbert——" a burst of tears interrupted her, and for a few minutes, there was silence in the room, only interrupted by her sobs. The servant had thrown her arms round her mistress, and in spite of her own tears offered the consolation of mute and affectionate caresses.

"Do you mean, he is dead?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I have every reason to fear it. I may know more to-morrow. Oh! let me cry; if I do not give way now, how do my duty to-morrow?"

She wept on as a person weeps who has for some time allowed tears to gather in her heart.

More judicious than many of her class, Mary seemed to understand that the present was no

time for interfering with this indulgence; and though she still from time to time murmured a few faint words, they were more of endearment than consolation. At length the paroxysm passed; and exhausted, but somewhat relieved, the lady rose and began to undo the roll of drawings.

"I must finish this picture to-morrow, and you must not let me sleep after daybreak. I am better now, Mary," and she faintly smiled, and held out her hand to her faithful attendant. "After all, why am I so weak? is he not happier, if dead, than immured in that dreadful prison?"

"Oh, no, miss; while there is life there is hope—I will not believe he is dead."

Her mistress was silent: she would not unnerve herself by another word. She languidly unrolled the drawings, and put them aside, one after the other, after a careful examination. They were seven in number.

"This is the one," she said, as she opened the sixth; "this is admirable and precisely in the same attitude as mine; it will be a great

help." She separated it from the rest, and then gave a careless glance at the seventh. "My God!" was her exclamation.

It was the portrait of a man. Strangely enough, there was a resemblance in his beautiful and marked features to the more delicate but less perfect face of the Signora Agnese: in this moment of strong excitement especially, the likeness was apparent. It was but a sketch, yet there was evident truth in it—what is vulgarly called a speaking likeness.

"It must be," she said, as Mary looked in speechless wondernment in her face, "it must be Herbert: how strange! It is like a revelation at this moment."

"Look at these initials, miss, H. T., dated a year back."

"Most strange! Moroni gave me so many details, but could not ascertain the date. I am to meet him again to-morrow, and he will perhaps be able to give me more precise information."

"Do you know, Miss Agnes, I have a feeling

that brighter days are coming: it seems like a piece of good luck to have his portrait, just as you were so unhappy about him."

"We think it is his portrait, but are not sure: why should this Englishman have it?"

It was strange, and showed a great habit of suffering, to observe how rapidly the hope which had animated her features faded away, and was replaced by the melancholy calm which was their ordinary expression.

"I will copy this drawing, Mary. It will be a comfort to us all. I think it is only a wonderful coincidence. We must be grateful, however, for it, such as it is: I have often longed for a likeness of him."

"It is wonderfully like."

"I will not look at it again to-night. I will go to bed now and try not to think," her lips quivered slightly; "to-morrow there is so much to be done, and—perhaps to be borne."

Mary undressed her mistress, kissed her, and left her.

Had any one followed the good woman into her

own room, they would have seen her kneel down and pray earnestly. It was affecting to hear her, and to see how the homely face was exalted by the earnest and solemn feelings. Many manifestations of love have been hymned by poets and described by novelists, but few have ever recorded the ministering faithful devotion of these humble friends. The daily service of her life was given by Mary with ungrudging entireness to the beloved being who, first as nurseling, then as mistress and friend, filled all the affections of her simple heart.

With the first reddening of the morning sky, she again stood by Agnes's bed. She sighed heavily as she drew aside the curtain and looked upon the pale face hushed in peaceful sleep: it seemed too hard to rouse her to the daily task, to the daily sorrow. But she knew her mistress, and she knew that she never spared herself. She called her, therefore, having first carefully put aside the picture which had so agitated her, and placed the sketch which was to assist her, by the easel.

When Agnes sat down to her work, little difference could have been seen in her countenance from its usual patient expression. The lips might be paler, the lids a little swollen, and perchance there was a little more languor in the attitude; but few would have guessed the terrible expectation of sorrow which was at her heart.

"I have resolved upon one thing," she said, turning to Mary, "I will send to that Englishman and ask him if he can give me half an hour's conversation this evening. I will ask Giacinto where he lives, and go from his house."

"Thank God! Miss Agnes, the moment I saw him, I felt as if he were no stranger. You used to laugh at me, my dear, and say, I was superstitious; but for four years, I have seen no one who has so reminded me of the Grange."

"The Grange."

"He did indeed; and what is more wonderful, and I am surprised you have never noticed it, he is so very like Mr. Herbert, he might be Mr. Herbert himself, only older and more man-

like. He is very like you, too, Miss Agnes, and your poor dear papa."

"I have not noticed it."

"At first I thought the picture might be of himself, but he has written underneath it, 'My dear friend H. T., from memory.'"

"It is true, I did not observe the likeness, for I have scarcely looked at him; but this evening I will do so and judge for myself. I will write the note at Giacinto's and send it from there. But you may be mistaken, Mary, for as I tell you, you always see everything through Tremorne spectacles."

Mary looked as if she thought these the only possible ones through which to view the outer creation, but did not answer. She busied herself arranging the studio.

"Shall I throw away this palm, Miss?" and she murmured some anti-papal remark.

"No: poor Giacinto will be vexed not to see it when he comes, poor little fellow. Let it stand on the table."

Mary had a general feeling of dislike for the whole Roman population: dislike blended with

scorn; and towards Giacinto and his relations, this dislike was rendered more intense by seeing her mistress waste, as she called it, so much good money and generous kindness on such a reprobate set. There was something of superstitious fear in her dislike to Giacinto; which Agnes used to attribute to her awe at knowing that the boy was the model for many an infant St. John or child Saviour. The limitations of the Jewish tables of stone might still be found in Mary's Christian piety, as to all those who were not within the strict circle of her affections.

"This picture is to be sent for this evening, Mary: be sure it is carefully packed."

Agnes worked on diligently. There was great strength and beauty in her composition. It was the interior of an Italian peasant's hovel, with the usual picturesque confusion of living beings and animals grouped together under one roof. Festoons of Indian corn hung round the walls, and shining pine cones were heaped up in a corner. One of the large white oxen of the country stood in a shed, into which this kitchen, or rather

"osteria" room opened; a child was sleeping beside him, with his hand on the cord which fastened the animal to the wall. There was a little dim shrine on the side of the stove, before which burnt a strange shaped lamp; and, seated on the settle below it, was a fine brigand looking figure cleaning a rusty carbine. Superstition, lawlessness and beauty were emblemed in this picture. In the foreground, on a ruined shaft of a column, which served as a table, was an Etruscan *alto relievo*, that might have represented Andromeda, for it was a female chained to a rock, awaiting in utter hopelessness the onset of a most fierce-looking monster. Beneath it was written in strange characters, "Italia." This was thirty years ago!

CHAPTER IV.

GODFREY WENTWORTH'S studio presented, as every room long inhabited invariably does, a faithful portrait of the tastes and perhaps character of its inmate. In this instance it bore abundant witness of the desultory habits, but artistic instincts of its owner. It was littered with books, papers, pictures, and casts. Evidences of talent, but proofs of a want of steady preliminary culture, might be found in the number of unfinished sketches strewed about. These might, however, be construed by an indulgent observer more favourably, as aspirations towards an ideal which existed in his mind, and which he had hitherto been unable to reach.

This restlessness of occupation might also denote unhappiness, a want of interest which needed the zest given by a fixed purpose and a worthy aim. Millicent had much to answer for if this were the case.

What graves some women are to some men? But there is a day of resurrection to all, when the angel clothed in white sits by the sepulchre to summon us to God!

To most persons, however, the great versatility of acquirement and accomplishment which it revealed, would be in itself interesting. Certainly no one could have entered that room without being struck by its aspect, and had they done so at the present moment, with the appearance of the person who sat reading at the window.

Godfrey Wentworth was not precisely handsome. His features were somewhat thin and sharp, but it was a face which impressed one with the idea of power. There was power in the broad, high and massive forehead, in the piercing glance, and in the thoughtful, resolute expression. It was not a face which invited

confidence, it was too stern; but the most superficial observer of character would have felt that confidence once given, might there repose immutably as on a rock. Like many apparently severe characters, he was totally indifferent to pleasing others, but in the depths of that earnest, true nature, was a great yearning for love, and an almost childlike sensitiveness. The struggle between the doubts and pride of the man of the world, and his really warm, generous impulses, was visible to all who looked below the surface, and who could distinguish Manner from Character, Seeming from Being.

He looked more serious than usual, as he sat reading. He had been disappointed. A deep, incomprehensible interest had been excited by a stranger, and that stranger surrounded by equivocal circumstances. For a woman who lived in the mysterious retirement of the Signora Agnese, to meet by appointment, as it seemed, a person like Carlo Moroni, was, to say the least of it, questionable. The proud man

flinched from the stinging idea that there was sufficient romance in his imagination, to be roused by the mystery which surrounded the object of his thoughts. There was no venial excuse of beauty and youth. The eye was not pleased, nor the senses charmed. How was it that from such a dim, lifeless umbra, soul had flashed out to soul, and the hidden Egeria whom we all seek, that knowing we may adore, had revealed herself to him?

It was evening, and he was just rising to leave his studio, when the door opened and his servant gave him a note.

He opened it, the handwriting was unknown to him. It contained these words:—

"Will the English artist who kindly left his sketches in the Via di S. Onofrio for Signora Agnese, admit her for five minutes, as she wishes to ask him a few questions."

Though usually very prompt in his decisions, Wentworth hesitated. There seemed a pertinacity in fate, perpetually bringing him in contact with this person.

An antagonism was roused, and he sat down to write a negative for that day, at least, on the plea of an engagement, when Agnes, who had herself brought the note, and who was too anxious and absorbed in her own fears to think of etiquette, hearing he was at home and impatient of the delay, entered.

"Excuse me," she said hastily, going up to him; "but the subject on which I wish to speak to you admits of no delay. It is of life and death importance to me—and mine. I wished to ask you about a portrait I found in the roll you brought me last night. This one," she said, opening it.

A revelation seemed to flash over Wentworth's face. He begged her to sit down, and almost took her hand to lead her to a seat. The whole expression of his face was altered, and there was as much eager anticipation in it as in hers.

"I must have put up this by accident. It is the portrait of a very dear friend, Herbert Tremorne."

"Herbert Tremorne! where—when did you last see him? Oh! if you knew——"

"I saw Herbert Tremorne about four years ago. Pray be composed, Miss Tremorne, you see I know you."

"Four years!" and as if this destruction of eager hope had touched something vital, she leant back, and Wentworth imagined she had fainted. It was but for a minute, however; she roused herself, and in a hollow, choked voice, asked,

"Why was that date below the portrait?"

"Because on that day I heard from him."

"You heard?"

"I will tell you: but will you not let me know, first, if my conjecture is right: you are Miss Tremorne?"

"I am Agnes Tremorne, his cousin; my sister Imogene would have been his wife—the day before they were to be married he was arrested. He belongs to one of the secret societies of Italy."

"I know it; a few months after we parted I

knew he was arrested; I hastened to Milan; but he had already been transferred to Spielberg. A year ago I met a man to whom I was of some service. It was at Trieste, and I sheltered him from somewhat unpleasant attentions on the part of the police. After a while, he told me his name, and confided to me that he had escaped from Spielberg. He was trying to get back to Italy, but his privations during his imprisonment and his sufferings afterwards brought on a 'pernicious' fever, which carried him off in a few weeks. Before he died, he put into my hands a letter from Herbert Tremorne, enclosing one for you." Wentworth paused; his agitated listener mutely implored him to go on.

"Do not agitate yourself; but I must prepare you for what——"

"I am prepared for everything, only speak."

Wentworth went to a writing case, and drew from it a letter which he placed in her hands.

"This is all I know."

Agnes held the letter in her hand for a second, then opened it with an effort; but she trembled so that not a single syllable was legible. She could not read it. She rose, and with faltering steps tried to reach the door.

"I will take this letter home."

Wentworth assented; but the struggle was too much; before she could turn the handle of the door, she fell down insensible.

How contradictory and inconsistent is a man's heart! But I like Wentworth so much, I can afford to speak of his weaknesses and faults. When Agnes Tremorne rose to go, Wentworth felt slightly injured and offended, there was evidently such a strong desire on her part, that there should be no acquaintance between them. In spite of the tie which was now established by the letter, and by his acquaintance with her cousin, she was resolute that he should not witness its effect upon her. He was a stranger now as before. Yet at the minute she fell down almost at his feet, overpowered by the unnatural endeavour to appear calm in a moment of such

grief, he felt that vexation, which many men have, at anything approaching to a scene. I must do him the justice, however, of saying that the feeling was gone even while he was conscious of it. He raised Agnes, and placing her on a couch beside the open window, loosened her mantle, took off her bonnet with the gentleness and care of a brother, and chafed her hands assiduously.

When she came to herself she was at a loss for a minute to remember where she was, but the letter she held in her hand recalled her to consciousness. She held it as a criminal might hold a written condemnation, in helpless acceptance of irrevocable doom.

When she raised her eyes, she met the look of Wentworth fixed kindly upon her.

"How strange!" she said, as for the first time she appeared to have seen him distinctly. "Mary mentioned it, and I seem to see it plainly now; can it be our morbid imaginations alone, or have you ever been told you resemble Herbert?" her voice trembled.

"Yes, he used to say we were more like than many brothers. He called it a fatal likeness for me and a fortunate one for him, as *I* should probably have to pay the penalty of *his* political misdemeanors." He tried to make her smile.

"My servant mentioned it to me, she was struck with it directly. It is pleasant," she added, with much simplicity, "to be indebted to you," she held out her hand. "I will now go home."

"You must not think of it yet, pray rest; you must not think of me as a stranger; I am proud to say that I was" (he corrected himself)—"that I am Herbert's friend. I have often heard him speak of both of his cousins—of his uncle—ah!" (he understood the sudden shrinking of his pale visitor)—"I am no stranger, Miss Tremorne, let me be of use to you. Have you any means of receiving intelligence from him?"

"I have."

"Directly?"

"No: would to God it were so. I heard yesterday that a rumour had penetrated beyond the fortress several months ago, that a fever, which had broken out in the prison, had been fatal to many of the prisoners."

"Exactly so. The man whom I met, must have brought the seeds of the disease with him. He told me that Herbert would have escaped with him — there were three of them; Herbert and another in one cell, he in the adjoining one;—but Herbert was so prostrated by the fever that he would have been unequal to the slightest exertion; besides this, his other companion was dying; and with his usual sweetness and generosity, Herbert would not hear of leaving him to die alone, or listen to Montara's propositions of delay. He insisted on it that the attempt should be made at the time appointed. They parted, and Herbert having made use of some coarse paper which wrapped round some fruit that a good-natured gaoler had brought him, wrote to me a few lines, enclosing that long letter you hold. My agent's address

is on the outside, to whom it was to be enclosed if I could not be found; but he was to exhaust every effort in finding me first, and deliver it himself. Since then I have searched for you in Venice, Milan, Florence, and finally Rome, where I have been three months. But my inquiries were fruitless: I can understand why, for I always inquired for an English family, a father and two daughters."

"My father died soon after we came here," said Agnes, with a deep sigh.

"You will see in that letter, which I was permitted to read, that you are in a measure consigned to my care." Wentworth tried to speak lightly, for he could see, as the colour came and went in the countenance before him, with what a strong effort she controlled her emotions. "Let me be of use to you if you are alone here."

"Yes, I will think of you as his friend. You can scarcely imagine what a painful position is mine: not only sorrow, but a dreadful necessity,

which obliges me to conceal sorrow. I could bear it better, control myself, learn submission, resignation, if I had been able to indulge it for a while; but I cannot do so, my life is a deception, my daily task concealment. My sister Imogene, ever since the day her happiness was so terribly interrupted, has never been herself. She has lost her memory on some subjects entirely; as to others, she is totally unconscious: she still expects Herbert, and thinks that every day is the one preceding her marriage. She does not know of our change of fortune, of our altered position. At first my father thought it best to humour her, to indulge her, and now a revelation of the truth would kill her, even if she were sufficiently recovered to comprehend it. With his last words my father made me beware of the least shock to her nerves—she is not even aware of his death. She lives a kind of charmed life, fenced from all realities. The shock on the nerves has affected her limbs, she cannot walk, but is lifted like an infant from her bed to her couch; sometimes her eyesight is affected; and there are other

symptoms of catalepsy, which have baffled the science and skill of the physicians. To keep her amused and occupied is our constant care, Mary's and mine; at times her health suffers very much."

"But is there no remedy?"

"My father bade me hope that in time she might recover, at least partially. The shock was so terrible and her organization is so excitable, that he said it was not an unnatural circumstance that it should have this effect."

"Have you no physicians?"

"None, since we left Venice; in the first place, we are very poor, in the next, it would be a dangerous experiment to alter the system. My father taught me to mesmerize her, and every few days I am forced to exercise this method of soothing her: her nerves are often most intensely acute and irritable. You see I have literally no time to indulge in sorrow." She smiled a wan sweet smile, more affecting than tears. "I must go now," she continued; "I may

be wanted at home. Thank you for your kindness and sympathy: I will try to hope still."

This brief detail of almost unparalleled trial touched Wentworth to the heart. The patient heroism of the sufferer, her utter unselfishness and entire self-devotion, brought almost the tears to his eyes. With feelings of no common reverence he assisted Agnes as she put on her cloak and bonnet, and accompanied her downstairs.

He did not offer his escort, but tacitly it seemed understood by both that he should walk with her.

"I came here," she said, "with a faint hope at my heart; but it seems that in the space of this half-hour, I have passed through long years of sorrow. As if the last nail were fastened down over a corpse. All life is extinct now."

"I would not," said Wentworth, with much emotion, "bid you cherish hope for one whom I have mourned myself as dead — yet you know there *is* a possibility — some have recovered."

"The dead have been raised," she murmured, almost wildly; but recovering herself rapidly, she said, "I have an appointment to-night with the same persons from whom I heard these fatal tidings yesterday."

Why did Agnes use the plural number?

"You are not equal to it, let me go for you."

"No; I must go myself and alone. Let us part here."

Wentworth instantly dropped her arm. He was chilled again.

"As you will, but I must see you to-morrow:" he spoke rather imperatively. "Herbert would think it strange were we to part thus. I ask for his sake."

"Yes; come." She pressed his hand kindly, almost gratefully, and went on. He looked after her awhile, and then retraced his steps.

She had not gone farther than the Borghese Palace before she met Egidio.

"I am so sorry, Signora; but my master begs me to say, with his compliments, that it is

impossible for him to keep his appointment; the police have had their suspicions roused, and he is watched. I believe he intends to leave Rome for a week or two. The dogs of Sbirri have been rather troublesome to me too, and I shall be off to the 'Macchia' one of these days, if they will not leave me alone."

This is the polite mode among the Roman people of expressing a temporary recourse to brigandage, by way of helping on their other gains, or to escape from the police.

"He has sent no other message?"

"None."

Agnes grew yet paler as she listened to him. She distrusted this man. She had no choice, however, but to assent.

Egidio left her, and Agnes bent her weary steps homewards.

We none of us know till we are forced to renounce it, what a vitality there is in the frailest hope. Four years' absence, imprisonment and all the chances to which a life was liable when exposed to such sufferings as were inflicted on the

prisoners of Spielberg, had not been able entirely to destroy the hope in Agnes that Herbert would be restored to them. On his return depended Imogene's health and life. Could Imogene be restored to health and happiness, what more could Agnes desire? Beyond that boundary there existed for her nothing. There would have been a wondering doubt in her eyes had any one said, "Do you wish nothing for yourself?" so entirely had she for years merged her own individuality in that of the sister she so tenderly loved. Education, circumstances, a naturally unselfish nature, had combined to create this self-abnegation in her. But a certain expression and development is necessary to the self of each of us, to be controlled, directed and harmonized of course, but it must exist. Life must be in all: "The living shall praise Thee—O God! not the grave!" and where we find an unnatural compression of the instincts and yearnings towards individual happiness which we all possess, there also will arise a Nemesis to assert and avenge them. Agnes believed she had closed her accounts

with Fate, that she had stepped upon a platform, which, by its very isolation, was fenced in from all accidents; but she was wrong. The lightning strikes the ruin as well as the palace.

CHAPTER V.

HERBERT'S letter, which Agnes deciphered with difficulty, ran thus:—

"I trust this letter to a chance that may fail, my beloved ones; yet as it is my only one, I dare not leave it untried. When it reaches your hands you will know how near I was to speak to you, to see you, to touch you; but now this letter must fulfil all I would have done. Four years of agonized suspense and intense hope end in this. Of myself you will hear by the messenger who bears you this; of you, I would ask how much, but how vainly! no questions of mine can receive an answer. So much would I say; yet how can words express the love which, when you receive this, will be beyond the grave! Words are but a poor

utterance for an immortal spirit! What strange fears and forebodings crowd on me as I write! Are you all together still—my uncle, Imogene' Agnes? Have you endured and lived through all these years of anxiety? I have never repented, I can never repent: were the power given to me, again would I make the same efforts for the same cause; nor do I complain. As I counted the cost before I undertook the task, I knew that defeat would expose me to this; to be vanquished and spared was not in the chances of the game I played: yet when I think of the hour when the doom reached me, and of what bliss was foregone, for my life to rot here, an impotent rage assails, or rather assailed me; of late I have struggled with and have overcome my frenzy and despair.

"I often wonder where you have taken shelter since I have been here. Not a day, spite of its odious tasks; not a night, spite of its darkness, chains, and misery, has passed, without my thoughts having gone to you—you three loved ones. There have been times when the illusion has been so

vivid that I have with difficulty refrained from calling aloud. Some say that such is the effect of imprisonment, and that the first disease it produces is this disordered state of the nerves and senses, altering or veiling the real, and presenting as real the phantoms of the imagination. Let it be so. The loss is compensated by infinite gain.

"How would I prolong this letter, as if by delaying its close, I could delay the inevitable end of all! When I think these words may meet your eye on some future day, when I, who am now writing them, will have long passed away, there is a strange sweetness in the thought. In some moment of discouragement and sadness, when the pang of hope deferred has tortured you and driven you to utter despair, these words may reach you, to tell you of my deathless love!

"Had not the hand of death been on me I should have accompanied——It is best as it is: this shattered body, this weakened mind, are scarcely capable of aught but passive endurance; and death is less a pang here, where it seems

to unite me with you all, than when its bitterness would be, the parting from you all.

"Are you all together? will all three read this letter? that question returns and returns. Imogene, if your hands are the first to hold this, my darling, you will read my assurances of unaltered, unalterable affection. How I bless you, my own, and with what vain regret I think that but for me, your sweet youth would not have been darkened by this anxiety and sorrow! I have a friend, Godfrey Wentworth. I have sometimes thought—for in this living grave, all self is as much buried as in death—that I should like to think of you in the future years, as sheltered and cherished by that noble heart. He and I are strangely, I used to say fatally, alike, but the likeness will be no peril to him any longer, and I have often been reminded of him, when I have looked at my uncle and at you, Agnes; and with an abnegation of my own heart, of which I had not thought myself capable, I have hoped—no, I cannot hope it—would to God he may be to you as your

friend, your brother, but no more. Imogene, be faithful to me—to me.

"Agnes, what shall I say to you? were you right and I wrong? it matters little now. If adoring gratitude be not love, then I do not love you; yet what have you not been to me, and what are you not still, to all I love! With you beside her all these years, I know how all has been softened and mitigated for Imogene; and that whatever may have happened, neither my uncle nor she will have borne one iota which the unflinching self-devotion of your whole existence could preserve them from. Your father meditates on life, Imogene dreams through it, *you* only live, Agnes; and on earth to live, in all the meaning of that word, is to suffer. Perhaps at this very moment you may need support, counsel, in some matter in which were I with you, I could help. I have turned over in my thoughts so many possibilities; you want a man's arm, and I am here, fettered, imprisoned, powerless. If knowing you as I do, I could suppose that you would address yourself

to a stranger, I should say, write to Godfrey Wentworth; I will write the address of his agent, where a letter sooner or later will always find him. I know him thoroughly, and thoroughly from my heart, I say to you, rely on him. A contingency might arise, when for those you love you might require the aid which you would shrink from for yourself. May these, my last words, have the sacredness of a last wish, and induce you to follow my suggestion. I must now finish this letter, and with it closes my life. May God bless you all, my loved ones; the hour of parting has come."

There was a date about twelve months back, and so finished Herbert Tremorne's letter.

True, there was a bare chance; recovery from a dying state has been heard of; but Agnes felt a consciousness that had not death laid its grasp on him, Herbert would have escaped. Had it been only to die without the walls of that dreadful prison, that effort would have been made. No, it was over; that heart had ceased to beat, that life on which Imogene's

restoration to health depended, was extinct. Agnes could have found it in her heart to envy the unconsciousness of her sister.

She was sitting with the letter before her, in mute grief, when Wentworth entered the next evening. Mary admitted him without reference to Agnes. It was well she did so, for Agnes would never voluntarily have broken through her rule of seclusion, especially at that hour.

"It is useless," she said, in answer to an attempt at consolation from him. "I feel now how I have clung to this hope by the anguish I am enduring. Since the day Herbert was torn from us, and for weeks I stood beside my sister scarcely hoping that her life would be saved, all through the terrible realities which followed our leaving Venice, vainly seeking in change of scene some benefit for our poor sufferer, till our steps were arrested here by the death of my father—through all the toilsome days and weary nights of my struggle since, I have thought that Herbert's return would bring back peace and happiness again, and have nerved myself to endure everything

for this; now, what will be the end of all? Can I hope for Imogene's restoration, bereaved as she will find herself? No: I am flung down helpless, hopeless, to bear a perplexed and miserable existence. I must continue the tacit deceptions as to our position and as to Herbert's return, which have been hitherto less painful in the hope that time would prove them not wholly untrue; and now how can I meet Imogene?"

"Have you not seen her since?"

"No; this morning, Mary told her I was ill, and had not risen, which was the truth; and she was contented to be dressed without me. Such a thing has happened once or twice before, and she will get through the day without me; but to-night I must go to her, and her first question will be—of him?"

"How does she explain his absence?"

"I think she is unaware of the lapse of time, and she always speaks of him as returning for their marriage. Each day she seems to take up the same idea, that it is the eve of the day on which they are to be married, and then she

expects him hourly. Sometimes she is irritable and impatient, and has convulsive attacks, when I mesmerize her, and that soothes her."

"Have you never tried whether her sleep is lucid?"

"No, I have been afraid of trying her nerves too much; besides, I have been grieved to find that I am losing my power."

"That is very probable. You are overtasked, and should give up your painting or cease to mesmerize her. Both you cannot continue."

"You are right," said Agnes, with a deep sigh; "but what can I do?"

"Let me assist you. I have studied the phenomena of magnetism. If you would permit me, I would try to mesmerize her; another person introduced with due caution and preparation to your sister might be of itself a benefit and change to her; and the repose would be of great advantage to you."

"But how can I thus take up your time?"

"Miss Tremorne, do you still consider me

a stranger? Have you not that letter beside you? For Herbert's sake can you not accept of me as a friend? We are alike, I see, not only in our features, but in our dispositions. Your reserve is equal to mine; but this is for so important an object that you might, I think, waive your scruples."

"You have undertaken an irksome task; but alas! I am too friendless to close my heart to such kindness. I frankly accept your friendship. There is but one thing I must warn you; in this strange double life I lead are many mysteries; do not seek to penetrate them. I will disclose to you all I can, without betraying the secrets of others."

Agnes looked steadfastly at Wentworth as she spoke. He winced slightly, for he remembered the man he had once seen her meet; but he made an effort.

"As you will; when will you let me see your sister?"

"To-morrow."

"Nay, let it be to-night; she will be anxious

CHAPTER VI.

THE room occupied by Imogene Tremorne contrasted in every respect with the simply-furnished studio of her sister.

It was a long, lofty room, with one large arched window at the end, opening upon a small balcony filled with plants. A vine, which hung from the roof of the house, grew in great luxuriance on the walls of the third and fourth story, and its long tendrils and large leaves made a green curtain, which somewhat veiled the upper part of the windows of the apartment occupied by the Tremornes. This was on the third story.

The intolerable light of the intense skies of Rome was softened during the day by this verdure,

and the dark purple clusters of the grapes which shone through it.

Heavy hangings of stamped Cordova leather concealed the walls. The gilt designs upon them had faded and become tarnished by time; but here and there some arabesque remained intact, and shone out clear and bright. There was something mysterious in this sudden glitter; it seemed as if an impalpable finger were tracing strange characters on these walls, and the fancy was taxed to discern a continuity and meaning in them. The furniture was of carved walnut wood, black with time, and of massive construction. Over the lofty mantel-piece, a Venetian mirror, in its elaborate steel frame, sparkled in the lamplight, for it was evening, and relieved the sombre effect of the rest of the apartment, into which, however, the moonlight was always allowed to penetrate.

On a low couch, wheeled in front of some crimson curtains, which apparently masked a door, lay the slight form of Imogene Tremorne.

Nothing in her face denoted illness. Her complexion was clear, if not rosy, and very fair—of that brilliant fairness, lucid as a topaz in the sunshine, which is peculiar to Italian blondes. Her features were very delicate and small: the lips only were a little paler than is usual with complete health. The auburn hair hung in heavy masses—bronze in the shadow, gold where the moonbeams fell on it—round her small oval face.

The wonderful colour of this hair harmonized well with the eyes, soft black Armenian eyes, luminous with that splendour which is as unknown to us northerns, as is the radiance of the oriental sun.

This face, of which the eyes and hair were of such extraordinary beauty, bore no resemblance to that of her sister. As Agnes approached her, Wentworth was struck with the delight expressed on Imogene's face, and the facility with which all emotions could be read in it contrasted with the steadfast calmness of expression which was so remarkable in Agnes.

"Darling Agnes—how long the day has been!

I thought you would never come: but tell me, what does Mary mean? She says you have news of Herbert—did I understand her? for I have such a headache I can scarcely see or hear." As she spoke, she half raised herself from the couch.

"Hush, dear, you must be quiet."

Passionate tears fell from Imogene's eyes.

"I cannot be still—has anything happened? to-morrow we are to be married—why was he not here yesterday? It is intolerable—this suspense."

"He has sent a friend to tell you——"

Agnes' voice faltered and broke.

"A friend? who? why? Is he not coming himself?"

Wentworth now approached close to her. When Imogene saw him, she looked wildly at him for a moment, and then to the unspeakable wonder, it may be said terror, of Wentworth and Agnes, she raised herself, and with an exclamation of joy threw herself from the couch into his arms.

"Oh, Herbert, you have come at last! then

all will be well!" She clung to his neck, she kissed his hands, his cheek, his lips.

Wentworth supported her to the sofa, but her arms were on his neck, and she clung to him with the strength of insanity.

Agnes was speechless. The error was a natural one, and the imperfect light favoured it. Well might Herbert Tremorne have said they were fatally alike! Imogene was the first to recover herself.

"Why do you not speak, Herbert? what is the matter? what has happened? But I do not care; now you are come, all will be well. Things have been so confused," she put her hand up to her head. "I do not understand how or why; but you will tell me. Agnes, why did you detain him? But now sit down, both of you."

She drew Wentworth down beside her. Agnes sat down from sheer inability to stand.

"Do speak, your silence frightens me," pleaded Imogene.

Wentworth felt he must command himself, but

the scene was trying even his strong nerves to the utmost.

"I cannot speak when you are so agitated, it is so bad for you."

"I will be quiet, dearest; I shall be well now. I have been so very ill, Herbert, I do not know how long: let me hold your hand; I feel so tired—I think I could sleep."

Thoroughly exhausted, she laid her head down on the pillow and closed her eyes. She soon opened them, however, and spoke again.

"Do not go, Herbert."

"No, not yet."

"Where have you been so long?"

"In Germany."

"But you will remain with us."

"Yes; but be composed now and try to sleep."

"Why do you not say, dearest, as you used to do? I am not mad, am I? You are my Herbert?" Who could have undeceived her? Her life seemed to depend on the answer. "Speak," she continued, wildly; "say *dearest*."

"Dearest!"

"Where is Agnes?"

"Here, Imogene; but we must both go, if you will not rest—you are trembling all over."

"I will, if he promises to stop."

She was again silent, and looked as if she were falling asleep, but her lips seemed to part every moment with happy smiles and grateful prayers, and the lovely face looked seraphic.

As the sleep became deeper, Wentworth loosened his hand from hers and laid it on her forehead. He then commenced very slowly and gently making the usual mesmeric passes over her. She seemed sensible, however, to the new touch, looked disturbed, and then faintly called, "Agnes!"

Agnes rose instantly with the mechanical movement of one in a dream. There was a fear in her pale face, and it seemed much more under the influence of magnetism than that of her sister. A dismal and prophetic foreboding pervaded her whole being.

Her hand must have had an icy coldness in it, for as she touched her sister, Imogene shuddered and shrank from it. A wordless and inarticulate murmur expressed disturbance and grief. The bubbles which rise on the surface of a stream give not a surer or more distinct assertion that in the depths below there is trouble. Agnes took off her hand, and a quieter expression returned.

Wentworth then continued, and after awhile she sank into a profound mesmeric sleep.

"We had better not try her further," said Agnes.

She then slept again, and only recovered her consciousness for a few minutes. The sight of Wentworth, whom she still mistook for Herbert, restored her more than anything else. She took his hand in hers, and held it so fast, that for fear of again awakening her, he dared not move.

And thus he sat beside her through the brief night, till the early morning shone into the room, lighting up the mystic walls; and a bar of sunshine, reflected from the Venetian mirror along the

sombre floor and across the sofa, touched Imogene's pale lips as she slept. But the glory reached not Agnes and Wentworth, who sat beside her. They were severed from her by the gray shadow in which they sat, and which so darkened their faces, that they could not see each other, as they conversed in whispers upon the strange error she had fallen into.

"I must undeceive her," said Agnes.

"For Heaven's sake, not yet," replied Wentworth; "you must let me return and complete her cure, for cure her I shall. For four years, you say, she has never moved by herself, from this couch; twice to-night she has made an attempt to do so: does it not prove that the joy she experienced has produced a healthy shock on the apparently paralyzed limbs? and if restored to the use of them, and to the enjoyment of free air and exercise, health may be recovered; and then when stronger——"

"I have such sad forebodings."

"You are so wise, so calm, Miss Tremorne; would you for the sake of imaginary evils, which

you cannot even define, yield up the certainty of a positive good?"

"It seems like sacrilege to Herbert."

"Can not you trust one whom he trusted?"

"And what right have I thus to use you, to——"

"My life has been hitherto so selfish and idle, that to suppose I can be of service to any one is to give me an interest in it, which it has long wanted. It is a folly to speak of oneself, but I am a disappointed man, Miss Tremorne, whom circumstances have made almost heartless. If I can help you and your sister for a time, it will be a pleasure to me. Should happier hours come for you, should Herbert return, I will submit to be thrown aside and discarded as a book which has been read through, or a staff of which the pilgrim has no further need."

"You are too good."

"Not good at all; for one occupied in the studies and researches I am, can anything be more fruitful of interest than to observe so interesting and singular a sufferer?"

A crimson blush rose slowly to the temples of Agnes.

"I have an inexplicable reluctance to accept your kindness; I scarcely know why. On the other hand, I know that what you say is true, and I am tempted for Imogene's sake."

"I would help her for her sake and for yours."

"Oh, I am nobody."

"Then for your sister's sake."

"Yes, for her sake, come to-morrow; and let me hope I am not doing wrong."

They shook hands, and he rose and went out slowly.

Agnes remained by her sister's side for some time, then helped Mary to undress her, without awakening her, and Imogene was then lifted tenderly in their arms and laid on the bed.

Agnes went to her own room. She took out Herbert's letter and re-read it. She then clasped her hands over her forehead, and seemed lost in some earnest and painful reverie. But a resolution was taken at last.

"I think I am right," she murmured. "He wished us to seek the aid of this very man; whatever happens, I am so far right."

When she raised her head, her features had regained their usual resolute stillness, but she looked as if in those few minutes, months of struggle had been gone through and conquered.

Wentworth went home more interested than he had ever thought it likely he should be again. The singular and exquisite beauty of Imogene, dimmed as it was by her illness, produced a most wonderful effect on him. His imagination was indefinably perplexed and occupied. Her youth, her helplessness, her strange illness, which needed such a strange cure, appealed to his imagination with a force he could not resist. He had studied deeply the subject of magnetism, at a period when it was little known. In Germany he had mesmerized experimentally, and obtained some strikingly suggestive results.

Wentworth was one of those men who are

peculiarly drawn to recondite research and mystic studies. In these he had found consolation and occupation, when all else had failed or disappointed him. His mind was of a dreamy nature, and such employments were peculiarly in unison with it. The good fairy who presides at the birth of each of us, had amply endowed Wentworth; but the inseparable evil sorceress, who always accompanies her benevolent sister, had bestowed, at the same time, an indifference to approbation and a want of ambition, which robbed the good gifts of much of their lustre and wholly of their use. Old friends and companions knew absolutely nothing of Godfrey's tastes and pursuits. There was a general persuasion, that he was a clever fellow, but it was generally uttered with the condemnatory addition, "A clever fellow, but he will never do anything." He smiled and went his way.

He had an invincible dislike to public life in England, and he was totally destitute of the essential quality towards achieving success in

this career—party spirit, that heaven-born gift, which is so peculiarly the appanage of Britons. He was not a splitter of straws; yet nothing could convince him, that because he was a liberal, he was to vote for his party always.

Great results are produced by consistent association, it is true, and it would endanger important questions if slight shades of difference were to separate votes; but when vital questions are at stake, if it be the policy of a government, for the sake of keeping office, to reject or postpone them, why should not a protest be made by those to whom progress is dearer than party?

Historically, Wentworth was a politician. He studied the past, compared it with the present, and traced effects from causes with a subtlety of inference and largeness of generalization which very much resembled genius. But he was deficient in the power of expression, which is a gift of itself.

Expression is the flame of the fire. A glowing fire gives out heat to those immediately near it, but

the room remains dark; let it kindle into flame, and there is light as well as heat. The word must be made manifest ere it can vivify and enlighten. Wentworth had observed and taken the deepest interest in Italy and Italian struggles. He had watched with a bitter and grieved spirit the spasmodic efforts made from the north to the south of the Peninsula. His friend, Herbert Tremorne, had indoctrinated him during a pedestrian tour they had made in Germany, and he understood the object and scope of most of the secret societies which swarmed at the time in Italy. Wentworth doubted the propriety of some of the means they employed, though he was as inflexible as they were in his resolution to attain the end proposed. But he was imbued, in spite of himself, with some English prejudices.

We calm and sober people, who never gesticulate, who scarcely ever raise our voices, think—knowing as we do that our unimpassioned manner often covers the most stormy states of feeling—think that where the manner is ex-

cited the feelings do not exist, and usually buoy ourselves with the notion that all the expressiveness of foreigners, in the manifestation of their feelings, proves a lamentable want of feeling itself. This is utterly illogical. Convulsion and paralysis are symptoms of the same malady.

There was one point, however, in which Wentworth differed from his Italian friends. They anticipated a speedy end to the fiery ordeal through which they were hastening: he did not; he was less blinded by present passion. He saw that it would require the slow development of years, before Italy could be free. The heavy pressure of one set of foes, the intrigues of others, were all to be overcome from without; within there was wanting unity of purpose, and concentration of aim. There was too wide a disproportion in numbers and in intelligence between the educated few and the uneducated many. A few clever professional men, students, and guerilla captains, however distinguished and heroic, cannot achieve the freedom of a country. There must

be the steady development of a numerous and improving middle class.

Such a class may be totally ignorant of theories, but they are masters of the resources of the country, and their voice must be heard. In every nation a certain number of these men, resolute for the removal of some abuse, or for the amelioration of some law, are much more effective than the enthusiastic dreamers, who with one blow would seek to regenerate their country.

Herbert and Wentworth had fully discussed these questions. Some feelings of antagonism had been roused against the cold Englishman, in the minds of some of Herbert's friends. Many Italians were shy of him in consequence. They even distrusted him, and became reserved in his presence. His unpronounceable name was never remembered. He was called L'Inglese; and as Tremorne, from his fair complexion and tall stature, was called by the same epithet, continual mistakes were made. Wentworth had been once arrested instead of Herbert;

and though accidentally the presence of another Englishman, an *attaché* to the Legation, who knew Wentworth personally, had rectified the mistake almost immediately, and without the slightest effort from Wentworth, it had given rise to suspicions of him in both parties, the conspiring and the conspired against.

As usual, such suspicions were utterly unjust. Wentworth had contributed largely in money to the aid of the Italian party. The funds which supported newspapers, which educated youths, which helped the suffering families of exiled and imprisoned fathers, brothers, and sons, were provided, in a great measure, by him. Tremorne's arrest had been a great blow to him. He had hastened to Milan, but the prisoners were kept too strictly *au secret*, for any stranger to be admitted.

Wentworth had taken a brother's interest in the poetical and enthusiastic artist. Their personal likeness was, as it generally is, a type of great moral resemblance. The character of the one had been mellowed and softened by the influence of a

happy home with his uncle and cousins; that of the other had been hardened and soured by great disappointment and early suffering.

Now, however, their fates were reversed. The gentle Herbert was consigned to a living grave, torn from his family and from all the pursuits congenial to him. On the other hand, fate had bestowed all those temporal gifts which even unworldly men value as means to attain higher ends,—wealth, liberty, and leisure. Yet such is the contradictory nature of man, that several times in the last forty-eight hours Wentworth had envied Herbert.

CHAPTER VII.

AGNES and Imogene Tremorne were half sisters only. Mr. Tremorne, their father, had married twice. He was an Englishman of ancient name, but of small fortune. He was last heir in the direct line of a small estate in Cornwall, called the Grange. He was a philosopher of the school of Godwin, and his opinions on most subjects were considered so ultra, that he rarely mixed with his neighbours. He lost his wife, a pretty gentle country girl, after a year's marriage. She left him the little Agnes, and he devoted himself to his little girl. Agnes till the age of eight grew up with her fond indulgent father, and a cousin two years her senior, in her wild but beautiful home, the Grange.

Her summer days were spent in rambles along the seashore, and over the moors; her winters, seated on a stool at her father's feet, reading or drawing. She had even then shown a great taste for drawing and painting. She would sit for hours copying some of the figures on the old carved chimney-piece, or some of the designs of the ebon cabinets in the room, while her father was absorbed in a worm-eaten black-letter copy of some quaint book on astrology or alchemy, some folio of Paracelsus or Cardan. His tastes were entirely of this description. At times he would talk out of the fulness of his heart to his little daughter, who, at an age when most girls are playing with their dolls, was made a companion and confidant by a mature man, of a most speculative and heterodox mind. The right balance was, however, kept by Mary, her nurse.

In the meek mind of this uneducated woman were principles, which she instilled into her little charge, and Agnes, who loved her dearly, was taught and schooled by her in the best of schools, that of love,

Herbert, a fine spirited boy, shared his cousin's play and studies, but was of a more riotous disposition, and was not so often admitted into Mr. Tremorne's sanctum.

He was the next heir to some of Mr. Tremorne's property; and though the strict entail of the Grange ended with its present proprietor, it was sometimes planned by Mr. Tremorne, to leave the landed property to him, and for him to marry Agnes. No two human beings began life under more favourable auspices than these two; but unfortunately Mr. Tremorne made the discovery that while he was studying and meditating on the past, his agent was utilizing the present. A system of fraud, persisted in for years by this man, who was embezzling the rents for his own purposes, came to an abrupt termination by his death; and one morning Mr. Tremorne discovered, he was not only ruined himself, but had been the ruin of several of his tenants. There was but one thing to be done. The order was given and carried out, of selling the Grange. The property was valuable, though made

of so little use by its owner; it sold well, and with the proceeds Mr. Tremorne paid his debts, and removed with his family to Italy.

In one of the Venetian palazzi which frown on the Canal Grande at Venice, commenced the second phase of Agnes Tremorne's life. A far less happy one. Mary was left in England, and the poor little girl was almost entirely alone, in a strange land and amongst strange faces. Her cousin was left at school at Turin (his mother and all his relatives, on the mother's side, were Italian), and her father after a time seemed to be a changed man. He neglected all his favourite pursuits, for the furtherance of which he had selected Venice as his abode, and was continually absent from home. This change was soon explained. One day he informed his daughter, that he was going to be married, and claimed her duty and reverence for her new mother. Agnes was innocently rejoiced at this news. A mother to her was the realization of that fair gentle face, which looked down on her from the walls of her own room. They had brought

with them a few relics from the Grange, and the portrait of Agnes' mother was among them. She threw herself into her father's arms and promised delighted obedience. Two days afterwards Imogene Cornaro, the Venetian actress, became Mrs. Tremorne.

Agnes was seated in the saloon, waiting her father's arrival (a pretty, fair little girl, with regular features, and bright hair), when the door opened and her father entered. On his arm hung, scarcely taller than herself, the loveliest fairy that was ever seen. Such a glow of colour, such wondrous dark eyes, such radiant drooping curls, Agnes had never seen before. She was so surprised, she did not think of embracing her stepmother. She went up to her with childish curiosity, and touching the rich scarf she wore, she said,—

"Papa, she is like a fairy, but not a mamma."

The delighted little beauty clapped her tiny hands, and sitting down on the ground then and there, in an oriental attitude (she was half an Armenian), drew the little girl to her and began

caressing her like a child who has discovered a new plaything.

Mr. Tremorne was evidently madly in love with his bride. Men like him, when once the sensuous and imaginative part of their nature is touched, especially if it be in mature life, are proportionably headlong and intense in yielding to it. The charm which such qualities have on us in early life is then paid like an usurer's debt. It has accumulated, and must be rendered.

Little Agnes admired and almost worshipped her new mother, but more as one prizes and worships something entirely removed from one's own sympathies, than as one loves a mother or sister; and there was more of petting and caring for, in the affection of the child for the lady, than of the lady for the child. Their relative positions seemed reversed. Imogene seemed to feel instinctively that there was more reliance to be placed on this child's sense and thoughtfulness, than on the fits and starts of her own wild temperament.

She loved and honoured her husband, and

was most affectionate to Agnes, whom she leant on with a reliance which would have surprised most persons. But the instincts of the little lady were true. She knew that she could draw largely on that element of love, which was the very being of her stepdaughter.

Imogene was an exquisite jewel to wear on festival days, but she was not a comfort in a man's home. A retired dreamer and scholar, like Mr. Tremorne, when the first effervescence of his love was over, was disturbed and perplexed by this firefly at his side, but Agnes stood in the breach between them.

It was an early apprenticeship; the lessons taught in the Grange were put in practice here; and Agnes was happy, and developed in this new home and under this new influence. No two human beings could be more different than these two; Agnes was like a fair, delicate lily, Imogene like an oriental cactus. There was a glory of beauty about her, a voluptuous exotic perfume, but full of strange self-willed grotesqueness in leaf and stem.

After a year a little girl was born, named, after her mother, Imogene; and the child promised to inherit all her mother's beauty.

After her birth a great change took place in her mother. She became first dissatisfied, then unhappy, and often passed in abrupt transition from the wildest gaiety to the deepest despondency. She no longer went out accompanied by Agnes, and sometimes for days no one in her own home saw her: then for a day or two she remained continually with them, and overwhelmed both children with her caresses, and her husband with a kind of wistful tenderness. These alternations almost wore the character of insanity, and it is probable that they did partake somewhat of it. Organizations so finely strung as hers, are easily jangled and put out of tune. Mr. Tremorne suffered from them in a kind of blind, helpless way, but did not attempt to fathom their cause. Agnes was still so much the child, that she could not even conjecture what occasioned the change. It was touching to see the care and steady devotion she paid to her little sister,

beside the ebb and flow of the mother's attentions. Sometimes the elder Imogene would watch Agnes, rocking her little sister's cradle, and her eyes would glisten with tears. There was great trouble evidently in the heart of the fairy.

One evening, when little Imogene was about a year and a half old, a catastrophe occurred. As usual the children had left the saloon together, and had gone to bed. Since the baby had been weaned, the children had slept in the same room, which opened on one side into a smaller one where the nurse slept, and on the other into Mrs. Tremorne's dressing-room. Late at night, Agnes was awoke by a strange sound. She looked and saw her stepmother leaning over the bed where her baby lay, sobbing convulsively. Agnes remained quiet, for she was too frightened to move. She then saw Mrs. Tremorne take the child very gently in her arms without waking her, and go, with her asleep on her bosom, into her own room. There was a pause; and then Agnes heard the shutters unfastened

and the window opened. She jumped out of bed and noiselessly entered the room. Imogene was on the balcony, leaning far over it, as if she were about to throw herself into the water beneath. The child had awoke, and was laughing.

"Mamma," called out Agnes.

And when Imogene turned she saw a little white robed figure at her feet.

"What are you doing here, Agnes?"

The voice was choked, and the face that looked down upon her was dark with emotion.

"Come back, mamma, mamma! It is so cold."

And the child's teeth chattered together between fear and cold.

"Go in, then."

"Give me baby, mamma—I will take such care of her."

"Will you? will you really, truly take care of her?"

"Oh mamma! you know I love her better than anything but papa—I do indeed, and I love you too. Do come in!"

Imogene stood for a minute with the baby

in her arms, a pitiful sight in her rich dress, her long hair streaming round her, uncurled by the damps of the night, and her lovely face disfigured by some terrible struggle; but her moods were as changeable as the winds. She continued her eyes fixed upon Agnes, and then, with an expression of appeal Agnes never forgot, said,—

"Take her, then, but promise me, kneel down and promise me, that you will love your little sister better than yourself, better than all the world——"

"But papa," murmured Agnes.

"That you will watch over her, cherish her, protect her, be a mother to her. Promise me," she said, raising her white hands on which the jewels flashed like flame.

"I promise."

"Take her, then; you have saved her, Agnes, from sorrow—ah! from sin perhaps also." Mrs. Tremorne shuddered, put the child into her young sister's arms, hurried her back to bed, and then said, "I bless you, and may God bless you as long as you keep your vow. Do not move or

stir till the morning." She laid her burning fingers on Agnes' forehead, kissed her and was gone. Before Agnes could raise herself in her bed, the door of communication between the rooms was closed and locked.

Agnes obeyed her command and did not move, and then after a few minutes' wonder and dismay, the little girl (she was but eleven) gradually fell asleep.

When she awoke, the first thing she heard was her father's voice. The baby Imogene was still asleep nestled beside her.

Her father stood beside her bed, evidently in great grief; there were other persons, servants, &c. in the room, and then Agnes heard that Mrs. Tremorne had disappeared. She jumped up, and her father, who saw by her face she had something to tell him, dismissed the attendants, and questioned her. She told him all she knew.

They forced the door open; all was as usual, save the open window. The dark lagoon kept its secret, if it had one, and the empty room

divulged none of its mystery. Nothing was ever known. There was a rumour which gained prevalence some years after, that some neighbours had seen a gondola moored not far from the palazzo about midnight, and that there was a sound as of quick oars rowing it away an hour or two later; the gondolier—for it was a hired one—spoke a long time afterwards of the large sums he had received to assist in the flight of a beautiful young lady with an Englishman from this very palazzo; but nothing was ever known with certainty. Imogene passed into the silence, and with her, all the music and light of her husband's life.

The scene itself, her father's mute grief, the strange blank which the absence of such a being as her stepmother necessarily caused in her young life, made an ineffaceable impression upon Agnes; but she kept her word. She devoted herself, heart and soul, to her task, and was everything to her sister Imogene.

Mr. Tremorne became more and more addicted to his studies, and but for Herbert's return, Agnes

would have been entirely alone, for the ten years' difference between her and Imogene precluded any companionship at that time. When Agnes was about eighteen, as may be imagined, from their being thrown so entirely into each other's society, Herbert fell desperately in love with her. He was a fine spirited youth, full of talent, animation, and generosity. His studies at Turin had had the effect of rousing all his sympathies for the Italian cause. Italy and Agnes filled all his heart. His eloquence and ardour won over Agnes to his cause, and it was during their long conversations on the subject, that Herbert felt, with the sweet face of his cousin to animate and reward him, there was no achievement he should not dare, no success he might not hope to win, for the cause to which he had devoted himself. She, on her side, was so accustomed to live in the life of others, to interest herself in what interested them, and to think of them on all occasions before herself, that at first she scarcely comprehended the feelings she experienced. She could not understand that in a heart so filled

as hers was, there was room for a feeling which had no reference either to her father or Imogene, but was not less intense. It was so, however, and she soon felt that she loved Herbert. She was so guileless, so inexperienced, and so ignorant, she did not contemplate that this love would eventually lead to any difference in her mode of life. Herbert spoke to Mr. Tremorne, who gladly accepted him as his daughter's future husband.

It was but the realization of the old dream of the Grange. But then came the difficulty. Herbert was poor and must work; he was an artist, and his profession obliged him to make journeys which must separate Agnes for months from the home circle at Venice. It was not to be thought of. Agnes would not, durst not, leave Imogene. Imogene must not leave her father. Mr. Tremorne was too confirmed in his habits and mode of life, to commence a wandering existence; he must remain where he was. It was a struggle, but the lovers yielded: the marriage was deferred. For eight years, except for occasional visits, Herbert was absent. He studied in Rome,

Bologna, Florence; he went to Dresden, Paris, Vienna. It was also during these travels that he enrolled himself in the "Giovine Italia" secret society, and laboured with and for his Italian friends.

His correspondence with Agnes was as tender as their relative position warranted. She was happy in this consciousness of love, which crowned her simple, active life, and in the pleasure of having fulfilled her duty. She patiently hoped that, when older, Imogene might be left with her father, and she herself be free. It was tacitly understood that when Imogene was seventeen, Agnes and Herbert were to be married. Not a whisper of this had, however, reached Imogene. Agnes had kept her young sister out of all the sorrow—for it was a sorrow—which clouded her life. The indefinite postponement of a great happiness is perhaps more trying than an absolute misfortune.

About six months before this period, Herbert returned, after an absence of four years.

Imogene was like a revelation to him. In the

last two years, she had passed from childhood to womanhood, with the rapid and complete fruition of her Italian blood and her Italian home, and was certainly one of the most exquisite of God's creatures. She charmed the eye like a sunbeam.

Her innocent familiarity with her brother, as she termed him, bewitched Herbert. His artist soul was enchanted. He could not take his eyes off her, and watched her every movement with an entranced enjoyment that was like intoxication. The imagination, the senses, the taste, the fancy were all captivated; but the heart would have remained faithful, and triumphed over these, had it not been for the magnetism in such feelings. Imogene saw them, understood them, reciprocated them. She knew nothing of the engagement, and spoke to Agnes of her own feelings with childish openness. She did not speak of Herbert's, but left Agnes to conjecture what they were. She acknowledged that not a word had been said, but she frankly confessed that, for herself, the Rubicon was passed.

"If papa were to prevent it because I am too young, or because we are too poor, I should die, Agnes." And the girl really looked as if she would.

She had the same impetuosity of feeling as her mother, though better disciplined in most respects. Agnes looked at her, and felt there was but one course. She must throw herself on the sword to save her sister. Had she been less modest, she would have reflected that this feeling of Herbert's was like an aurora borealis in the sky—a beautiful and fairy-like vision, but not the steady work-day light of the sun. Imogene was so young, she so loved her sister, that had a whisper of the truth reached her—had she but known of an heroic reason for so doing, she would have sought to conquer her love. She also had noble instincts, and the trial might have moulded into a higher development her weaker and more fickle nature; she might have been tempered to a braver use than to die of her love.

But Agnes was generous and self-sacrificing

to a fault; her retired life, and want of female companionship, had withheld from her all experiences of this nature. Had she paused, had she analysed Herbert more closely, she might have hesitated in her purpose; she only thought of the immediate happiness to be bestowed on both. This was an error. She took an opportunity, and wrote to Herbert that she had detected what his generosity would have concealed: she assured him he was free: that her love would still keep the sister's place in his life, which it had held in the happy time long gone by. She did not betray Imogene's secret, but she told Herbert she had read his.

But he did not see the effort which it cost to write this letter. The inanimate page does not bear the trace of the heartbreaks with which certain words are penned; the anguish of renunciation imparts no stain to written words, and the letter seemed cold. Herbert drew one conclusion from it—that Agnes did not love him; and this conviction was fatal to her in his mind. "La seule pensée qu'il n'était pas tout pour elle, fit

qu'elle semblait être rien du tout pour lui."* He thought that his return had discovered to Agnes that her feelings for him were no longer those of love; that the long absences, the growth of mind in both, had produced a chilling effect; and that he had been mistaken in his idea of the reciprocity of their feelings. He did not see beneath that reticence the burning, pained heart, or he would have discovered the self-devotion of her love in the resolution with which, after the letter was received by him, she avoided all further occasion of seeing him alone, or speaking on the subject. He waited a few days, and then wrote, with a proud, grieved spirit, "Agnes, you shall be obeyed."

No one noticed how pale Agnes had become; not even, when about a month afterwards, Imogene threw herself into her sister's arms, and told her how happy she was, did she see the white lips and flushed brow of the sorrowful face which bent over her, with a murmured exclamation of, "I have kept my vow."

* Rousseau.

Perhaps in the long, tedious hours of solitude at Spielberg, constant meditation on his loved ones may have revealed part of the truth to Herbert, but at the time itself he knew nothing; and as her tender counsel, her affectionate care, her gentle sympathy was still his, fully and entirely, he did not miss her.

Mr. Tremorne was spoken to; he was not surprised; he lived such a dreamy life, that realities were scarcely ever thought of by him. He thought it had been Agnes who was to have married her cousin, but he was glad she would remain with him. It seemed natural that Imogene's beauty should bear away all hearts, and he returned to his folios contented, and the marriage was settled. It was to take place at once. Each day as it advanced was cut on Agnes's heart; but she suffered, and made no sign.

On the eve of the marriage-day the thunderbolt fell. Herbert was arrested: the bitter consequences which followed have been already told.

At first, all that money and efforts of all kinds could avail were tried fruitlessly. At last the trial was over, and the prisoners were swept off to Spielberg.

Imogene's illness had prevented her father and sister from leaving Venice. At last, as a final resource, change of air and scene was recommended for Imogene. She was moved, by short stages, to various places in Italy, and at last, in the hope of benefit from a softer climate, came to Rome.

Mr. Tremorne was a heart-broken man: he never held up his head after he left Venice, and died six months after they reached Rome, leaving Agnes to bear the charge of her sister, alone, friendless, and all but destitute.

The only gleam of comfort she derived was from Mary, who had been sent for immediately Imogene's illness was pronounced chronic. Mary, in spite of the lapse of years, was still wrapped up in her former nurseling. She hastened with delight to her.

But for her patient care and indefatigable industry, Agnes must have succumbed. Mary

sat with Imogene while Agnes painted, and her domestic knowledge was of the greatest assistance to her mistress.

And this had been Agnes Tremorne's life: a peaceful childhood, an eventful youth, a laborious and sad womanhood. But in the serious and heavy cares of the last five or six years, her character had gained strength and power. Her girlish love for Herbert had vanished; she had a deep affection for him; he was her brother, the betrothed of Imogene, the only hope to which she clung; but she could not have travelled the same road again. The ship was submerged, and the waters had gone over it. Now and then a floating spar would rise to the surface, but the ship was not the less destroyed, though its fragments might still exist. The deeper waters might now bear a nobler freight.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Agnes went into her studio the following morning, she trembled so much that she could scarcely hold the brush in her hand. This had to be controlled; a certain amount of work had to be got through daily, to provide for daily necessities. And the whole burden fell on Agnes.

The insignificant pittance, which was all that Mr. Tremorne had bequeathed to his daughter, would have served only to supply the barest wants. It was imperative that no privation should be suffered by Imogene. Her dress, the comforts of her apartment, were exactly what they had been formerly. When they had arrived in Rome, four years previously, she had been too ill to

notice anything, and by the time they had established themselves in their present domicile, all had been arranged so as to give the dreary rooms a cheerful aspect.

Mr. Tremorne had selected the house from many others, for its retired situation, beautiful view, and cheapness. It was so far from the usual haunts of the strangers who come to Rome, that their solitude was absolute.

Every disposable piece of furniture had been placed in the sitting-room, which was to be Imogene's, and the other rooms dismantled accordingly. These old houses are often repositories of valuable carved wood, and Mary's nimble fingers had arranged and disposed of these, and she had sewed and stitched carpets and curtains till there was no convenience wanting.

Imogene lived like an enchanted princess—a charmed life. It was touching to see the contrast of the rest of the house to this fairy realm—this nest, which was so softly lined from the winter cold, and sheltered from the summer heat, for the little bird so cherished in it.

When Agnes arrived in Rome, she felt that on herself she must depend. Mary, invaluable as nurse, servant, as everything, in short, which related to attendance on Agnes and care of Imogene, was like a child in all other respects.

Accustomed to the comfortable habits of an English household, Mary's first initiation at Venice into Italian customs had well nigh driven her frantic. And when they arrived in Rome, and it was necessary to limit to the utmost all expenses, she seemed almost petrified.

"What would they think at the Grange, Miss Agnes? Who would ever have believed it, miss, when you were at the Grange? at the Grange, dear, the out-door servants' rooms were more comfortable than yours." Such were the perpetual litanies chanted daily for the first few weeks.

English servants have excellent and invaluable qualities, but their slavery to Mrs. Grundy is more entire than that of any other class.

Yet, on the whole, Mary preferred reigning alone

and supreme over the whole domain. She could not understand Italian, and the black eyes, violent gestures, and childish extremes of laughter and tears of Italian servants, perplexed her. At present, with one woman to go to market for her, and clean the house under her directions (a "donna di faccenda," as she is called in Italy), and who was dismissed every day at twelve o'clock, Mary was enabled to "keep things together," as she said, in a tidier and more Christian manner.

She was fond of both the ladies, but "Miss Tremorne" was an angel in her eyes, and her faith in her was profound. That such an angel should have to live among wild Italians, who were dirtier than the cattle in England; and that a lady who had been accustomed to the life of the Grange should paint pictures for sale, were incomprehensible trials, to which she could submit, but never resign herself.

It was a dispensation which sooner or later, according to her ideas, they *must* indubitably escape from. The deliverance could only come

When Agnes arrived in Rome, she felt that on herself she must depend. Mary, invaluable as nurse, servant, as everything, in short, which related to attendance on Agnes and care of Imogene, was like a child in all other respects.

Accustomed to the comfortable habits of an English household, Mary's first initiation at Venice into Italian customs had well nigh driven her frantic. And when they arrived in Rome, and it was necessary to limit to the utmost all expenses, she seemed almost petrified.

"What would they think at the Grange, Miss Agnes? Who would ever have believed it, miss, when you were at the Grange? at the Grange, dear, the out-door servants' rooms were more comfortable than yours." Such were the perpetual litanies chanted daily for the first few weeks.

English servants have excellent and invaluable qualities, but their slavery to Mrs. Grundy is more entire than that of any other class.

Yet, on the whole, Mary preferred reigning alone

and supreme over the whole domain. She could not understand Italian, and the black eyes, violent gestures, and childish extremes of laughter and tears of Italian servants, perplexed her. At present, with one woman to go to market for her, and clean the house under her directions (a "donna di faccenda," as she is called in Italy), and who was dismissed every day at twelve o'clock, Mary was enabled to "keep things together," as she said, in a tidier and more Christian manner.

She was fond of both the ladies, but "Miss Tremorne" was an angel in her eyes, and her faith in her was profound. That such an angel should have to live among wild Italians, who were dirtier than the cattle in England; and that a lady who had been accustomed to the [illegible] paint pictures for sale, [illegible] which she could [illegible]

[illegible] could [illegible] came

that the family of one of the victims of the Spielberg fortress were at Rome, and he was requested to befriend and assist them in every possible way. He had not, however, seen any of the family but Agnes. He had called on her soon after her arrival. She had been induced to receive him, from his having enclosed her a few lines with his card, which conveyed to her some intelligence of Herbert, of later date than she herself had obtained. She had told him her sister was an invalid, and had thus excused her non-appearance. After a time, the fact of her having a sister had entirely faded from Moroni's mind. Both had agreed that it was most prudent not to meet often. If he heard any intelligence which could interest her, he apprised her of it; and then they met, and discussed it. Agnes, absorbed in her serious and melancholy life, was utterly ignorant and unconscious that the Italian loved her passionately. He was a fierce, unprincipled man, and his love was as harsh and ungenerous as the rest of his nature.

There is a love which purifies and softens the

character, there is a love which irritates and hardens it. Some men throw their love upon an object, as they cast a sword into its scabbard; the weapon wears out the sheathe at last. Such was the cruel love of Moroni. Had Agnes reciprocated it, he would have worn her out with his selfish exigencies and persecuting jealousy. She did not return it, and he would willingly have injured her, broken her spirit, and humbled her pride, to induce her to acknowledge his power if she would not reciprocate his love.

Egidio was his foster-brother. That is a tie never broken in Italy—a claim always acknowledged by rich and poor. Egidio would have served Carlo in any manner whatever. The morality of a thing was gauged by the simple fact that Carlo wished it or not. A thorough rascal towards every one else, he laid bare heart, motives, plans, with the most childish simplicity to Carlo. His unswerving fidelity to him had caused him to be employed in various ways, both politically and privately. His child Giacinto was

the only other object on earth to which he was bound by affection. But in any matter in which the interests of the child and those of Carlo would have come into collision, the child's would have been immediately sacrificed. It belonged to him, and must, therefore, be offered to Carlo.

With the quick intelligence of an Italian, he had discovered his master's love for Agnes. He superstitiously believed that something of magic must have been used, some *stregoneria*, for a man to fall in love with a woman who, to his eye, possessed no personal charm whatever. So pale, *così gracile, più tosto anchè attempata;* and to have excited the love of a man who was known in Rome for his facile conquests of some of the most beautiful women in all ranks of life, was an unceasing wonder to Egidio. And that the subject of this passion should be utterly insensible to it, was a crime he could not forgive. He literally hated Agnes. He continually paid for nine consecutive masses (*a novena*), to beseech the Virgin to free his master from this magic blindness. He would have thought his prayers

had been answered, could he have discovered some beautiful woman whom he could have thrown into Moroni's way, so as to dispel the sorcery under which he suffered.

Moroni's plans were utterly vague as regarded Agnes. She was a Protestant and poor. Marriage seemed a madness, and yet, with the impressionability of an artistic nature, he was fascinated by the refinement, the grace, the elegance, which gave her a charm more seductive to him than mere youth and bloom. The child Giacinto was not more alive to her serene sweetness. The wily Italian, so astute and impenetrable in his dealings with men, had a corner of his nature singularly alive to beauty, and there was something almost religious in the reverence, as well as love, with which he regarded Agnes. He was conscious, too, that she had a genius for her art, which would command fortune. Beyond most men Moroni respected the power of making money. He valued it, but the power of keeping it or producing it was utterly ignored by him.

He did not, however, find himself progressing with Agnes. The very first step, that of exciting an interest in her, was difficult, if not impossible. The coldness proverbially supposed to be the attribute of Englishwomen, in Agnes was more chilling than ice itself. And behind that ice, there seemed the most indomitable reserve. But his patient ferocity was not to be baffled. "She was a woman, therefore to be wooed; she was a woman, therefore to be won," and he trusted to time.

Her isolation was in his favour. She was under a solemn promise never to reveal his name, or his acquaintance with her, but to meet him in public, should such an accident happen, as a stranger. Information about Herbert was to be given her only on this condition. This was the rule among the secret societies in their intercourse with all beyond their pale. Such a secret, Moroni thought, must interest a woman, and the mystery of their meetings give a zest to them. And these meetings were generally proposed by herself. She was obliged to have recourse to him occasionally.

Her interest in the beautiful little Giacinto

brought her often into contact with Egidio. Through the artless replies of Giacinto to the questionings of Egidio and his master, a system of "espionage" was exercised. But as yet not a step had been gained. Agnes was utterly unconscious, and would long have remained so, but for these unfortunate tidings about Herbert.

This morning (it was the morning after Wentworth's first visit), as she sat painting with resolute industry, her thoughts were entirely upon Imogene. It was a terrible position. For one who loved both Imogene and Herbert, there was a kind of profanation in the bare idea of continuing her sister's hallucination: a treason to Herbert—an indelicacy towards Imogene. On the other hand, were Herbert dead, and did Imogene partially recover health, she might, at some future time, be made to understand, when the knowledge would not be so dangerous, that it was a dream produced by disease. As to Wentworth, it might certainly prove an injury to him, and what could remedy it? Here Agnes was utterly perplexed.

She at length resolved upon what seemed a middle course. Should Imogene, on waking, as it was possible, retain no recollection of the previous day, she would tell Wentworth, when he came, that she would not risk his again seeing her sister. She must resign herself to lose the aid which his strong mesmeric power enabled him to offer, and which might prove of such advantage to Imogene, but it was right to do so. For herself there was the additional sorrow, which she must learn to bear, and conceal. If, on the other hand, Imogene had not forgotten, she must be indulged, and Wentworth must continue to personate Herbert. She had not courage to afflict the poor sufferer by telling her it was an illusion, and not the truth.

The mere fact of her remembering what had passed would be an improvement. Usually the trace of each day was effaced during the night. The faintest return of memory must, therefore, be cherished, not obliterated by rude haste.

The picture was finished. It is fortunate that

the circumstances under which work is done, are not apparent in the work itself, or the pleasure produced would be too often marred. Songs written by a death-bed to procure the money necessary for the cares required by the dead; pictures of gay and sunny scenes, painted with fingers trembling under the pressure of some terrible calamity; theatrical effects of the most beautiful and picturesque kind, wrought out by persons groaning under the anguish of some real tragedy, might lose their effect if the circumstances under which they are produced were known.

Agnes put aside her picture. She never forgot certain details in it, on which she had mechanically laboured while her ears were painfully listening for the tingle of Imogene's bell. Her heart had sunk with the stillness, while the terror with which she anticipated and dreaded its first sound seemed to deafen her.

At last it came. She was already dressed, and hastened to obey the summons. Mary stood beside the bed. Imogene's face was turned

anxiously to the door, but she had not spoken yet. When she saw Agnes, she flushed with an eager joy, and said,—

"Dearest Agnes, it is not a dream I know. I saw Herbert yesterday. I know it is no dream like those I have so often had, for while I held his hand I drew this ring from it, see."

Agnes looked and saw a simple Etruscan ring, with the device *Vis mea* on it.

She stooped down and kissed her sister.

"I am so happy, Agnes—at last. I shall make haste and get well now. How soon will he be here?"

"This afternoon."

These two words were the seal of fate, yet Agnes had uttered them almost unconsciously. But they were spoken and registered, and from them was shaped the future. Agnes then commenced assisting her sister to dress. Mary gave her a glass of water. She was frightened at the paleness of her mistress's face.

When Wentworth arrived, the sisters were

sitting together in Imogene's room. Imogene's reception was as rapturous as the evening before; but she was quieter and calmer in manner and gesture.

She held his hand in hers, and seemed contented to look at him. He mesmerized her, and she slept instantly, but Agnes would allow no experiments to be made.

After two hours of sleep, that seemed like dew to a flower, so refreshed did she seem when he awoke her, Wentworth took his leave. Agnes shrank as she saw the parting, and took the opportunity of leaving the room at the same time. She beckoned Wentworth to follow her into her studio.

"Mr. Wentworth," she said, in an agitated voice, "this cannot continue. I feel it cannot, must not; it is treachery to Herbert—to Imogene——"

"Do not say so, Miss Tremorne; if you could read my heart, you would see."

"Well?" she asked, impatiently.

"That there is no responsibility in this strange

position which I would not fulfil. Should Herbert not return—well, I will not dwell on that—but rely on me, Imogene shall never know the truth till she has strength to bear it. Herbert himself could not undertake with more earnest——in short, let that knot unravel itself. Should he return, and I seem to have a strong presentiment that he will, I shall, painful as it may be, yield my place and entirely vanish, if you so wish it. We are both resolved on one thing, that now and in the future Imogene's health and happiness are to be the first consideration."

Agnes fixed her eyes with steady penetration on the face before her, and a by-stander would have been struck with the extraordinary resemblance of these two persons. There were in both the same straight, well-cut features and pale complexion, the same coloured eyes and hair, and the same expression of resolution and of something, if we may use the word, "heroical," which belongs to those countenances wherein we may read force of will and strength of passion beneath great exterior calmness.

"I will hope for the best," she said; "it is more an instinct than anything else. There has been one present good gained at all events; but will not Imogene herself be shocked when the truth is made known to her?"

"Need she ever know it?"

"If Herbert returns?"

"If Herbert returns, we shall explain all to him, and he will understand our motives, and approve our conduct—of that I am certain. If in future years I meet Imogene a happy wife and mother, restored to all the happiness and enjoyment of life, she shall never know that our acquaintance does not date from that moment."

"But how unfair to you ——"

"Did I not tell you that I take all responsibility on myself? I have counted the cost. Besides, I am one who stands outside the usual interests of life—a spectator of, not a player in, the game."

He overruled her. The modesty and reserve of her nature made her conscious there was error, if not danger, in the course; and yet how could

the first false step be retraced, and how could Imogene be cast back by the hand of Agnes, into the dreary state from which this strange mistake had rescued her? Her paramount affection for her sister was a passion, and, like all passions, it blinded the clearness of the mental and moral view.

Wentworth, strong in his opinion of his own spent passions and hardness of heart, was not aware how far Imogene's enchanting beauty influenced his desire of being of use to her, how much the wish of being near Agnes in such a peculiar intimacy deepened his resolve of helping her in her hard task, or how strongly the charm of becoming a daily inmate of this loving and mysterious seclusion worked on a disappointed and idle man.

It is thus with us all; in life the bitterest sorrows flow not from our evil so much as from our mistaken actions. A vice indulged in lulls the conscience to rest, but an error stings the heart and rouses the judgment to self-condemnation.

"I shall see you, then, to-morrow?" said Wentworth.

"To-morrow? no; if you come at this time—which is the best for Imogene—I shall be out. I make my first appearance to-morrow as a teacher," said Agnes, smiling. "Rinaldi told me a few days ago that some English ladies had seen my picture, and had admired it so much, that they not only bought it, but ordered a companion to it, and that one of them wished to take lessons."

"And you are going?"

"Yes; the terms are such, that I do not think, with justice to Imogene, I could refuse. It is merely a temporary engagement, as they are only travellers, and the time is amply remunerated. Their name is Carmichael, and they live in the Piazza di Spagna."

"I know them."

"Do you know if the young lady I am to teach has any taste or talent for painting?"

"Not at all. I must say I cannot think of any occupation less congenial to you."

"Nay, why should it be so? If a pupil is intelligent, teaching must be a positive pleasure; and if not, and the task be a laborious one, the perseverance and patience required give a healthy excitement to one's nature, which produces pleasure in the end. Oh! if life were only to consist in doing instead of in suffering."

Wentworth touched her hand with unfeigned respect, and left her. He did not seem unhappy, yet how heavily he sighed as he reached home!

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning Agnes went to give a lesson to Miss Carmichael.

When the tall figure of her new instructress appeared on the threshold, Miss Carmichael hastened to greet her with an exuberant but somewhat protective welcome. This, however, she unconsciously checked, as her eye fell on Agnes. Agnes was a person it was impossible to patronize.

When she had taken off her bonnet and cloak, and had selected a drawing from a small portfolio she had brought, she looked up and saw that Mrs. Carmichael and her daughter were intently looking at her.

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Carmichael, "you are English, I am sure?"

"Certainly," said Agnes, coldly, and then added: "Did you require an Italian teacher?"

"Oh, no, it is an unexpected pleasure to find an English one," said Mrs. Carmichael.

She was one of those people who imagine that morality and principle are of English manufacture alone. She was a gentle and good-natured person, and therefore her practice was more amiable than her theory; but it was deeply impressed on her mind, that the people she lived amongst were destitute of the commonest notions of propriety, or morality, or order. The men were thieves or assassins, the women profligates. Her daughter's love for art she looked upon as doubly dangerous on that account, as it obliged her to mix with foreign professors.

Agnes was accustomed to much the same sort of feeling from Mary. It did not, therefore, surprise her to hear the exclamation of relief which Mrs. Carmichael uttered when she found she was English.

Agnes looked at the specimens of Miss Carmichael's standing in the art which she wished

to follow. They were as usual with such persons. They showed a certain quickness of eye and ease of execution, but were deficient in the first requisites of proficiency, care, precision, intention.

"I do not wish to be taught as if I were to be an artist," said Miss Carmichael, with modest deprecation. "I draw as an amusement merely."

A faint smile curved Agnes' finely moulded lips.

"Would it not be more interesting to you, if you learnt it thoroughly?"

"With my various occupations, I have little time to devote to merely an accomplishment."

Merely an accomplishment! Agnes required her strong sense that this was part of her duty to Imogene, and must be therefore fulfilled, or she would have taken leave immediately. With her passionate love for her art, it seemed like profanation to admit such an unworthy neophyte into its mysteries. She sat down beside her pupil, and drew out a study of the Ponte Rotto.

It was true and effective; but Miss Carmichael evidently thought it rough and unfinished, and taking up a minutely finished pencil drawing of St. Peter's, clear as an engraving, but with the lights and shades so ill-defined, that it presented nothing but a flat surface, faintly shadowing forth the outline of the façade of the Basilica, she said, that this was the style to which she had been accustomed. It was exact to precision, and yet totally unlike.

It is wonderful how false literal, or rather ignorant, interpretations of nature are. "Men as trees walking," is the first impression of the untutored sight; and quite as incongruous is the rendering on canvas of images of natural objects. If we attain line-by-line exactitude, we think we have conquered the difficulty. It is not so. Unless the manner in which the object has been pictured on the eye, is understood, with its attendant accidental effects produced by light and shade, we produce endless confusion. It is not only that the eye sees and the ear hears nought, but in obedience to the spirit it is that the objects them-

selves can be portrayed only through that medium. Agnes tried to explain how the effect had been marred.

Miss Carmichael listened and argued in her turn. She was intelligent and superficial. It is far less the case now than at that time, but there was then a great want of earnestness in women's pursuits. They were always considered as amusements, rarely as means of mental growth. Art for art's sake was ignored; its serious apprenticeship, its self-denying discipline, its absorbing pursuits, were considered to be out of place in a woman's education. The unhappy marriages, the miserable homes which are the consequence of unhappy marriages, the faults which children inherit and acquire in such homes, were, and are, the consequences of this. Had women subjects of serious importance to occupy them, that emptiness of heart would be avoided, which makes them prefer the least promising marriage to single life.

It must be confessed that the so-called happy homes of England often belie their name miserably. A family of grown-up daughters living at

home in almost the same state of tutelage as in their early youth, debarred from freedom of action and from freedom of opinion, with miserable little occupations which fritter away, but do not occupy time—often prohibited the healthy exercise which is as necessary to the mind as to the body, and systematically leaving the intellect, the heart, the blood in total stagnation—is it surprising that such women grow old as sickly invalids, or confirmed hypochondriacs?

Could we unroof some of these vaunted homes, and look into those sitting-rooms, in which the sanctity of the English hearth is supposed to be displayed, what pictures of ennui we should often contemplate! The father asleep over his paper, the mother over her carpet-work, one daughter dozing on a sofa, another yawning over the last novel. The day's employments have wearied all, yet what have they been? Busy idleness with the women, sordid striving with the man.

Too much interest in politics, too much fervour in religion, are prohibited as unladylike; and yet all these are living, breathing women, possessing

immortal souls: and we proclaim this virtue, and we count this happiness!

Miss Carmichael belonged to the average class of women, more clever than the generality; and her residence abroad had slightly emancipated her, but still the soil was shallow, and it had been cultivated parsimoniously.

"Are you related to Mr. Wentworth?" she suddenly asked, after having attentively looked at the harmonious delicacy of the face beside her.

"No; why do you think so?"

"You are so like him."

Agnes blushed, and, vexed with herself for doing so, blushed still more.

Miss Carmichael noticed this, and the consequence was a question which seemed irrelevant, but which a knowledge of human nature would have explained.

"Do you know his cousin, Millicent Wentworth?"

"No; I have only lately become acquainted with Mr. Wentworth."

"Did you ever hear he was engaged to be married to her? He was madly in love with her, but she jilted him, and married his cousin. Her husband has been dead, however, these three years, and she has arrived in Rome."

"She will, perhaps, soon arrive in Rome," said some one from the other end of the room. "Be correct, Laura."

Agnes looked from whence the voice proceeded, and saw a pale-looking, elderly woman, wrapped up in shawls, and propped up by pillows, looking at her intently.

The aspect of an invalid was always affecting to Agnes, reminding her, as it naturally did, of Imogene, and she responded to the observing look fixed upon her with a glance of such sweetness, that the lady smiled and bowed.

"My aunt, Miss Carmichael," said the younger Miss Carmichael, to whom the idea of introducing Agnes to any of the persons in the room would never have occurred. Her sister was out, and Mrs. Carmichael had left the room soon after the commencement of the lesson.

Agnes was conscious that the attention with which Miss Carmichael regarded her did not arise from mere curiosity. It was as if she were trying to find some resemblance for her, or linking together the fragments of some broken chain of associations or remembrances. But aunt May's was a countenance which did not make the scrutiny unpleasant.

"Will you show me your sketch of the Ponte Rotto?" she said.

Agnes complied, and rising took it to her, for she saw she could not move.

"Thank you; it is very spirited and effective. I recognize in this boldness of outline and freedom of touch the same hand that has produced so much effect in the picture my niece bought the other day."

"But, as I am telling the Signora Agnese," said Miss Laura Carmichael, "I am merely learning drawing as an amusement; I do not wish to make it a profession."

"Then, my dear, why do you learn it at all? There is but one road—art, or no art.

Why should you study that for which you can have no inclination, if such is your object?"

"How often, aunt May, have I heard you advise me to give myself an occupation in life, and to seek for resources against weariness and idleness?"

"Precisely, but never to pursue any art in that miserable half-and-half, ignorant manner, which is the bane of women in these days. Almost all young ladies imagine that some undeveloped gift lies dormant in them, which only needs scope and encouragement to reveal itself. But this scope and encouragement they expect from without; they never, by labour and perseverance, seek to obtain it from within. The waters must be stirred or the angel will not reveal himself."

Laura Carmichael smiled scornfully as she listened.

"Yes," said Agnes; "amateur music, amateur drawing, amateur authorship, are falsehoods, and as such are not only powerless for good, but productive of evil."

"Exactly so," said aunt May; "to be a poet, painter, sculptor, are God-given vocations bestowed on few; but every woman and every man have one mission, which they can all accomplish—that of being useful human beings. Why should they seek to build a tower without counting the cost? If they do so, they build on sand."

"What would you have women do, then?" asked Miss Carmichael, impatiently. "There are women who will never be great in literature or art; who are prevented, by health or circumstances from practising benevolence on a large scale, and in what I should call a professional manner; what is to become of these, if they do not try a little drawing, or a little music, or a little scribbling, always supposing they are single?"

"Let them go into the country and lead a healthy country life; let them invest some of the superfluity of their energies and a trifle of their means, in some garden, an acre or two of land, and they will lead useful and happy lives."

"Become farmers, then, on an amateur scale; it is still but amateurship!"

"No, that is the best of it; these are realities that cannot be played with. Care and industry bestowed on the earth is repaid a hundredfold, but it must be bestowed in the first instance. All can labour, and all can accomplish this work; and be sure, Laura, that in the end it interests more, gives a worthier end to life, than sketches which resemble nothing in earth or heaven, music which, like Dr. Johnson, one would desire were impossible, and literature which is without one heart-beat of life or one aim which is not conventional. Continual effort without power of attainment, is the most melancholy spectacle one can witness, and I would advise all women to estimate their faculties a little more modestly before they enter these arduous paths."

"But, aunt May, you have often talked about the efficacy and the necessity of work."

"Yes, but work adapted to the individual. Who builds a man-of-war from the bark of a willow-tree? And yet, do you not think the willow-

tree fulfils the intentions of its Creator as truly as the oak? If God has bestowed any especial gift on you, cultivate it honestly, develope it thoroughly, devote yourself to it ungrudgingly; if he has not, learn to be humble, and neither attempt to deceive yourself nor others. If you try to deceive yourself, life will be to you a *fata morgana*, deluding you with visionary palaces, for you to find yourself stranded on a bare rock at last; if you do not, life will be a steady voyage to some obscure but safe port."

Miss Carmichael looked dissent, but was silent, and commenced putting away her drawing materials. Agnes had listened with pleased attention. She now rose to take leave.

"You have a vocation," said aunt May, as she shook hands with her; "and you do right to pursue it. Come and see me sometimes, will you? One of these days I shall have something to ask you, and"—with a sigh—"to tell you."

She leant back on her couch, apparently tired, and Agnes, having fixed another day for her second lesson, bade adieu to her pupil.

Being in the neighbourhood, she made it her business to go and see Giacinto. He was better, but not well enough to rise. He put his arms round her neck and drew her down to him, whispering that he hoped she had been able to finish her picture without him, and asking when he should come again. She promised to send for him, as soon as he could come without injury to his foot.

His mother followed her to the door, and told her, in a mysterious whisper, that neither Egidio nor his master was in Rome, and that if she wished to communicate with them she must go to Frascati. Having given her information, the woman asked for *qualche cosa*, in the most confident, not to say impertinent, manner. Agnes declined, and the woman, though she looked most insolent, desisted immediately.

Agnes wondered to herself how much ugliness was consistent with the traces of so much beauty, and philosophized to herself on the fact that time improves the countenances of those persons whose outward form clothes a beautiful and progressing

soul, while its "irreparable outrage" is inflicted only on those whose bodies are animated by sordid or narrow minds. No good and mentally growing woman becomes ugly as she gets old. Those blooming girls, whom we see becoming plain and wretched-looking hags, are so because they have not possessed this salt; and again we come to the hackneyed truth, "Whatever is best, is safest."

Santa's (Giacinto's mother's) reflections were more practical. She made an untranslateable gesture, but evidently not a complimentary one, and muttered, "*Tu me lo pagherai.*" This did not threaten any dreadful vengeance, but only that in some way she should obtain the money. She was a frantic gambler in lotteries, and she spent all Giacinto's earnings, and whatever money she could earn herself, in this manner. Agnes' fondness for Giacinto she considered in the light of an inexhaustible purse to supply all her demands, and was very indignant at being balked in her desire, and resolute to obtain it in some way.

But no feelings and no impressions in life are trivial. This slightly antagonistic feeling towards her in the mind of Santa became the source of important and fatal complications in the fate of Agnes.

After the first few lessons which she gave Miss Carmichael, something more than an acquaintance was established between Agnes and aunt May. In spite of the somewhat formal manner and didactic tone of the elder lady—a manner to be attributed to her solitary existence, passed almost entirely among her books, or with her own thoughts, and not to anything dogmatic in her disposition—Agnes was much attracted by her. She valued her kind, affectionate heart, and admired the patient fortitude with which she bore so meekly a life of so much trial. Laura Carmichael sneered at her aunt's lectures, as she called them, though they were rarely addressed to her; her sister would listen with sullen indifference, and Mrs. Carmichael first wondered how it was that May spoke so like a book, and then accounted for it as one of the

many peculiarities which old maids manifested, and which were inherent in their unfortunate spinstership. But Agnes was interested in all she said, and listened with eagerness to the outpourings of an original, cultivated, and singularly unconventional mind. In fact, the first holiday-time Agnes had known, since her arrival in Rome, was the weekly visit she allowed herself to aunt May.

Imogene always went to bed early. Wentworth visited her ever other day. He continued to mesmerize her, and her health improved daily. One of the most decided signs of improvement in her state, was this increased power of sleep. She slept for hours, and this repose was both the effect and the cause of her calmer pulse and less excitable nerves. Agnes could leave her about seven o'clock, and would spend two or three hours with aunt May.

The change from entire solitude of mind (almost as deplorable a state as solitude of heart) to frequent communion with one so sympathizing and encouraging, was of the greatest benefit to

her. She could work the next day more freshly, more diligently, more hopefully.

Wentworth was often present during these evenings.

Each of the three persons who thus met learned to appreciate each other, though no apparent increase of intimacy was made by Wentworth and Agnes. To her he spoke little, though he listened attentively to all she said. Towards him she maintained the strictest reserve.

She would never permit him to accompany her home. Her fear of Moroni was instinctive. She felt that if he found she had departed in the least from her rule of strict retirement and privacy, he would make it a reason for pressing into a closer intimacy himself. This she was resolved not to allow. Except on the subject which was the link between them, she could not have borne his intrusion for a moment.

Agnes was often surprised during these conversations, at the knowledge possessed by aunt May of the most trifling anecdotes of her childish life at the Grange, and of her first years in

Venice. When she expressed this surprise, aunt May turned from the subject and did not explain the mystery. But this knowledge gave an intimacy and freedom to their conversations, which made them seem as old friends and not recent acquaintances.

Wentworth had told aunt May of the peculiar mental and bodily condition of Imogene. He had related the strange error which her half-awakened senses, coupled with his strong resemblance to her betrothed, had superinduced.

Aunt May looked very serious.

"My dear Godfrey, what a difficult, what an almost untenable position! Do you not fear that you will insensibly learn really to love her, poor child;—that you will *feel* love, as well as *act* it?"

"No, I do not act love; at least, love in your meaning of the word. But she is unconscious of this. I have the most tender pity, a fraternal affection, which I think could not be greater were she, in fact, my sister; but in spite of a beauty more enchanting than anything you can imagine, and to which the peculiarities of her

disease seem to lend a still greater charm, I have not, and could never have, any feeling for her which would make the position difficult in that respect. Imogene is an exquisitely beautiful child; she could only excite in me the feelings which children excite—tenderness, anxiety, care, indulgence; but a serious, life-giving, life-inspiring passion—never. It is a woman, not a child, who calls to the depths of a man's heart out of the depths of her own."

"And yet if you do not, how is it to end?"

"If, as I have a profound conviction—presentiment, I should say, perhaps—that Herbert will be restored to her, I shall know how to eclipse myself at the right moment."

"But if he should not return?"

"With returning health and strength this hallucination will fade. Even in her present state Imogene is often puzzled as to my identity with Herbert. In her more lucid moments, during my visits to her, there is evidently a discrepancy between the instincts of her real self and the delusions of her illness. It would be a meta-

physical study of the deepest interest, even to a mere stranger, to watch the ebb and flow of these impressions on her mind. The actual Imogene is incapable of being unfaithful to her memory of Herbert, and there are moments, when, in spite of my resemblance to him, a difference strikes her. When it does, her agitation is most painful. She attributes this apparent change or alteration in me to some imperceptiveness produced by her own weakness, and this alarms her much. One of her most alarming fears, is that she is losing her reason. She has mentioned this fact to her faithful Mary, to whom she is more communicative on all subjects connected with Herbert, than to Ag— to her sister. This is very touching, considering the actual fact."

"But what will be her feelings when she discovers the truth? Will it not effectually part her from Herbert, that she should have accepted you for him, and thought of you as her lover?"

"Her memory is still so impaired, that I doubt whether she is aware from day to day of

what happened many days previously. I do not believe that if Herbert were to take my place to-morrow, she would ask a question or make a remark, though I know she would be more at her ease with him, more affectionate towards him, than she has been to me. She would forget her present hesitations."

"But should he never come?"

"Be assured that until the day has arrived, when she can hear the intelligence, she shall never know it. My life is so poor in its uses, that it may well be spent in ministering to one so young and afflicted. I shall not swerve from my vow of devoting myself to her recovery, whatever happens."

"Even if by so doing you crossed the dearest hopes of your own heart?"

Wentworth flushed to the temples.

"Ay, even if I had such hopes; but I have none."

"What does Agnes think of it?"

"Agnes—Miss Tremorne?"

"Yes? she is so exquisitely sensitive and

refined, that I should think she must shrink with pain from this deception."

"She does, but the circumstances of the whole case are beyond her control now. She cannot interfere. At first she merely introduced me to her sister, at my own persuasion and request, and for the sake of my long friendship with Herbert, in the hope that the strong mesmeric power I possess might benefit Imogene and aid her own diminishing faculty. Nothing was more likely, nothing more desirable. The hallucination which ensued was widely out of our conjectures. Miss Tremorne did try to prevent my again seeing Imogene, but she might as well have murdered her sister with her own hands: the impression had fastened with such tenacity on Imogene's mind. She seemed unconsciously to feel, that with me were connected all her prospects of recovery and health. On one occasion I took advantage of a favourable opportunity to commence a kind of explanation. I had not said half a dozen words, when she fell from the couch on which she was seated, at my feet.

She was for hours in hysterical convulsions, and when she came to herself she was weaker —less alive I may so term it—than I had ever seen her. The truth must be told her with infinite care, and after a long, long time: at present she could not bear it. One must not deprive a lame man of his crutch before his lameness is cured."

"How is she now?"

"She is better again; since the first day, nothing can be more quiet and gentle than her general state. Her manner to me is most calmly affectionate. She has the petulance, but also the innocence of a child. She told Mary, a few days after I had seen her—I think, the day after our first interview—that she had vowed a vow, touching a little silver cross she always wears—she is such a mere child, poor Imogene—that till she was quite well, she should not look forward to anything but these pleasant quiet days. Mary thinks she alluded to her marriage. Were she a little vowed nun, her ways could not be more retiring and timid. Be comforted about her, dear

aunt May; let what will happen, there is nothing in our present intercourse which can grieve or wound Imogene, should she meet Herbert this very day. Herbert would trust her to me, I know."

Aunt May pressed his hand.

"I know how generous you are, Godfrey, and what self-control you have; my fears are less about Imogene, under any circumstances, than for you and Agnes."

Wentworth turned pale, but aunt May could not see him clearly, for his back was towards the light, and she was lying on her couch. She paused a little, and then continued,—

"I have such an earnest desire to see you happy, Godfrey; I am so anxious that a real and worthy love should heal the wounds of your heart's first failure; and when I think that there *is* one, who, if you could see her with my eyes, and if you were not in this perplexing coil—— Do you not see, I dread the possibilities rather than the actualities of your present position?"

"I will not affect to misunderstand you," said

Wentworth, in a rigid, constrained voice; "but you are blinded by your partiality for me, my dear, kind friend. Miss Tremorne is all you say; she is perfect, save in one thing—the sweet perfection of loving. She is too spiritual in her thoughts, her aims, her desires, for any earthly love, least of all for one so every way unworthy of her as I am. And I—— It is folly to think of it; but believe one thing, if I were to be so pitiable, or so abject a fool as to find that my esteem, my admiration, my reverence for her rose beyond my own control, and so far warred with my present position that I must avow it to myself to be love, she should *never* know it; or if I betrayed myself, I would arrange matters so as to leave Rome immediately. It would be a sacrilege to my love for Agnes to permit that, even in the fantasies of delirium, Imogene should mistake me for Herbert. This I know, but——"

"And then both Agnes and you will be sacrificed. I am deeply interested in her also: she deserves happiness, if ever human being did. It seems unfaithful to one's own belief in good

to think that she should not be so. God loves his own more than we can do, though in the heavenly language happiness has such a different meaning from what it has in ours!" She sighed.

"Miss Tremorne is trebly guarded by her own disposition—her indifference to me, and her love for her sister. She does not look beyond her recovery. The very first moment when, whatever may be the circumstances, we find Imogene entirely herself in mind, and sufficiently strengthened in body, we will tell her the truth; but long before that, I trust you will see there is no fear of any happiness being shipwrecked—but my own," he added, in a lower voice.

Wentworth took his leave, and aunt May reflected for a long while. She was delicate and refined in all her thoughts and opinions, but though no casuist, she had sufficient imagination to understand that these were abnormal circumstances which required abnormal conduct to meet them. If in a journey our road is barred by a chasm, which it is necessary to cross, we must take advantage of a log of wood, if there be no other

mode of passing over to the other side. It requires a steady eye and light footstep to keep one's footing; without them we are sure to fall; but it is possible with them to attain in security the other side.

No sophistry can make it right to do evil for good to ensue, but in this case aunt May felt there would be evil. What she regretted was the probability that both her favourites might be obliged to put aside their own inclinations until Imogene's complete recovery, which might be delayed for years.

"I can trust to Wentworth's chivalrous honour," she said; "but I own that the better he is, the more sorry I am. Should Herbert be dead, Wentworth loses all chance of Agnes."

CHAPTER X.

How often do we think we have done with the past, and how often does it return, wave upon wave, like the unflinching succession of a tide, on the sands of life! Never to love again! So we all say when we have lived through some desolating dream, and the glittering line of our past illusions shines in the distance, and we contemplate the tear-moist waste of our lives. Yet it is but for a time; God is good, and his laws are irrevocable; the ocean sweeps back again in foaming splendour, the rocks are submerged, the sunshine is reflected on the bounding depths, and life flows rich and full and bright around us.

Some such thoughts passed through the mind

of Wentworth as he repeated his visits to the Via di S. Onofrio. He became more and more interested, and feelings that he had deemed seared at their very root, gradually bloomed out anew.

Cataleptic patients are usually supposed the best subjects for mesmeric experiments. The phenomena produced in them are more curious and more complete: Imogene was no exception.

She improved rapidly. She was able to move. In her mesmeric sleep, she could even walk, and she followed Wentworth's gestures with the obedience of an automaton. But there were certain peculiarities which puzzled Agnes and Wentworth. Though her memory returned on many points, it never occurred to her, when she spoke, as she occasionally did, in her sleep, to remind Wentworth of their past brief dream of love at Venice, or to recall to him any circumstance which preceded it. In her waking state she continually did so, and he thus became acquainted with a great many details of their

past life. He even surmised from some of these the truth of a faint suspicion he had had, that the first choice of his friend had been the elder and not the younger sister. In her sleep Imogene was conscious of this, and would refer to it, but never to his love for herself.

One day, as he was asking some irrelevant questions, this peculiarity excited such a different train of thought, that, instead of answering him, she suddenly turned, and with the slow, faltering step of the charmed movement which impelled her, she approached Agnes.

"But it is not me he loves; no, dearest, I see it; he loves you."

A burning blush rose to Agnes' brow.

"Imogene!"

"Good-will, compassion, tenderness are for me; for Agnes—love."

"Herbert loves you, only you, Imogene."

"No, not then, not now. Herbert loved you first, and *he* loves you now." She pointed to Wentworth.

Wentworth turned pale. He took Imogene's

hand and led her back to the sofa. Agnes followed and bent over her.

"But," said Imogene, "there is always darkness between you two, and he will never be yours."

Wentworth did not reply, and allowed her to remain in a quiet, lulled state. He turned to her sister.

"I would apologize, if I might, at having become acquainted with—family secrets, perhaps?"

"In our position, that is of little importance, as regards you."

Agnes' voice was as cold as his, but her lips trembled.

Wentworth was not gentle by nature, and something stung him in the idea that the noble creature beside him had loved, and been loved, before he knew her. Men do not admit of jealousy of the past as regards themselves, but as regards the past of the woman they feel an interest in, they are despots.

Wentworth would probably have denied it, if

any one had asked him whether he loved Agnes Tremorne: yet her love for another at any past period was wormwood to him.

It would have been impossible to a nature like his, to have watched, as he had an opportunity of doing day by day, the unselfish, laborious existence, which was daily and hourly manifested to him—as leaf after leaf of a rose opens, till all its secret of beauty is revealed—and not become a worshipper of such excellence. But he confessed nothing and betrayed nothing.

Besides, the witchery of Imogene's ravishing beauty, her strange and mystic life, which hung upon his, her petulance, half disease and half enchanting playfulness, would have guaranteed to a superficial observer that Wentworth must be in love with Imogene. Yet of *her* past he was not jealous. He had no desire to revenge himself upon her if she had loved or had been beloved.

"If I could avoid it, I would not thus intrude upon your past life," he continued, in a forced and harsh voice.

The steadfast eyes were raised to his.

"As a friend, the only friend I have, there is nothing I would conceal from you, that regards only myself."

A soft answer turneth away wrath.

"I beg your pardon, but——" The direct question hovered on his lips, but was not uttered.

"I was engaged to my cousin Herbert," said the mellow voice of Agnes Tremorne, without tremor or hesitation; "but we found we had both been mistaken."

"Both?"

"Both! There are a thousand sympathies which girls and boys have in common, and it was natural that we should fancy, weak and inexperienced as we were, that these sympathies must be love. It was a great pain to find how mistaken I had been in my own sentiments; greater, I think, than when I first discovered I had been mistaken in his."

"How?"

"If you give a strong affection to another person, and imagine that you are giving him

your very best, even if he casts it away, there is a comfort in knowing that it was your best, and that the error is his. Is it not mortifying to feel you are as wrong as he is, and that it was not the true talisman, after all, which you bestowed? Had it been so, you must have won the prize. Your failure proves that the blame is yours."

"Not in all cases."

"No, not in all cases; but believe me, those cases are easiest to be borne."

"But Herbert——"

"Herbert's is eminently an artistic nature. Women whose persons suggest certain qualities to his imagination are prized by him more than the women whose souls might realize those suggestions. Imogene's beauty is an endless wonder and charm to him. I was always grave and quiet; she a sunbeam for warmth and brightness."

"But it strikes me now that he thinks differently——"

Agnes looked at him keenly.

"From Imogene's words—from his letter—from——"

"Mr. Wentworth," said Agnes, rising, "I beseech you, do not speak so, it would pain me more than anything;" and she shuddered. "Such a possibility would fill my cup of sorrow to overflowing; spare me."

"Why?" and Wentworth rose too, agitated and pleased that the bare thought should give such pain.

"Herbert to love *me!* Oh, how glad I am that it is impossible!" and she looked at her sister. "No, no love for me, now or ever!"

At that moment Mary entered, and Agnes left the room; she needed a few minutes' thought and solitude. She could leave Imogene now oftener than at first, for one of the peculiarities of her present condition was that Agnes had lost, almost entirely, her own power over her.

Unconsciously, perhaps, there was something antagonistic in the mind of the one which influenced the other. It is certain, that at this

time Agnes was not so necessary to Imogene as formerly. When she returned, she found that Imogene was awake, and calm and refreshed.

The difference in the characters of the sisters was as great as in their persons. As much more than her real girlish self was suggested by Imogene's wonderful beauty, so much less than the actual depth and force of her rare and lovely nature could be discerned in Agnes's gentle appearance. Is it not often so? The wisest and best of men are as often deceived as the most unworthy. The human countenance, since the days of the Sphynx, is a riddle. Who shall reveal its secret? We have dim revelations; and, explored patiently, there are signs which may guide us; but the first superficial notice is usually fallacious, and there are few amongst us capable of more than superficial observation.

Imogene's beauty was like genius; it was so suggestive, so varied, and so ever new; but it was all that she possessed of genius. Hers was

a sweet, impulsive, affectionate nature, but nothing more.

There was something so childish and dependent in her disposition, that it would never have occurred to her, even if well, to inquire into the state of their affairs. She received from Agnes, as we mortals receive from God—an unconscious acceptance of every good gift, as if it were the natural and unquestionable order of things; but if aught had been altered, there would have been sorrow and surprise.

This evening both sisters were occupied when Wentworth returned. He very often did so now. Agnes was embroidering for Imogene. Imogene was modelling a little group. She was copying it from a piece of beautiful wood carving in the room.

Mr. Tremorne had, as an antiquarian, gathered together, even during the short time he had survived his arrival in Rome, and in spite of his reduced means, some rare specimens of mediæval curiosities. They would have made the fortune of any *bric-à-brac* collector at the present period.

There were strange-looking, coffin-like chests in the room, quaintly and exquisitely carved, queer-shaped tubes and glasses of all forms and colours, which must have once shone dimly in an alchemist's laboratory with topaz, or sapphire, or ruby reflections.

Among the carved wood was a small group, which must have been the work of a great artist. It represented a tigress reposing, after having destroyed an antelope. The tigress was curled on a bank; her *pose* and attitude was full of voluptuous and undulating beauty. She had one foot, however, on the poor dead antelope, and the vigour in this action modified the air of sleek laziness of the rest of the figure, and gave it an appearance of cruel purpose. The antelope's wide open eyes had a look of almost human pathos and entreaty. Imogene was modelling this. She had a great facility in all imitative arts.

When Wentworth came in she looked up.

"Do you know, Herbert, I think that as *I* get well—and I seem to gain strength every day—Agnes is gradually becoming ill; she is so pale."

"My dearest, I am always pale."

"I am sure you paint too much. Nothing was ever like Agnes, she is so resolute in everything; she paints for hours, I know it. One of these days I shall go into that wonderful studio. Have you seen it, Herbert?"

"No, not yet thoroughly; I have been in it only for a few minutes."

"You know, Imogene, that I never admit any one if I can possibly help it."

"Any one—yes; but I am not any one. I know you call your studio the dressing-room of your pictures, and that you would as soon almost that any one should see you before you have finished dressing, as one of your pictures before it is completed."

"You know that it is natural that it should be so; my painting is part of myself. It is not an employment I can take up or put down, it is *me*. I paint where others would talk or write."

"Yes," said Wentworth, "it is the expression of your style of thought—nay, of your very mode of being; refined, deep, but sad—too sad, I think."

Agnes smiled.

"It is utterance to me; my inner nature is expressed by it, and by it alone."

"You are happy in possessing this capacity, and in making use of it. My whole life long has been a struggle for such power. Neither in art nor in literature have I yet been able to attain it. I do not know that I can say, with the French poet, Chénier, that I have so much in my brain it would be hard to die and leave it unspoken, but I do know that I could never as yet adequately express either my thoughts or feelings."

"There is one utterance which may always be ours; that of a life," said Agnes, gently. "A life which expresses what poetry, at its highest, imperfectly reveals, what painting portrays but dimly, and what music in its divinest strains but reaches by suggestion—self renunciation, and God aspiration."

> "Renounce, renounce that dreary song,
> Rung in our ears our whole life long."

Imogene hummed these two lines, and then, looking up to Wentworth, asked him if he did

not think enjoyment was more pleasing to God than renunciation of his gifts. She spoke like a pleading child.

"But the majority cannot enjoy, they must resign," interrupted her sister.

"And some are so situated," replied Wentworth, "that out of their barren lives they can find nothing to enjoy or to resign."

"No human being need be so situated while there are so many noble causes to which they can devote themselves. We can all aid that progress, which is the law of humanity, wherever it needs brains or hands; whether in England, where there are so many glaring social evils to be remedied, or in other lands, which are toiling for the hour of political redemption. Wherever there is disease, or want, or ignorance, we may find our work, and make for ourselves an utterance. If the fig-tree does not grow, let it be cut down: *that* seems to me the enigma of life. To grow—through pain, through darkness, through struggle—but to grow, and aid, as far as we can, the growth of all."

There was a flush on her cheek and a light in her eye as Agnes spoke, with a warmth not habitual to her.

"For me," continued Imogene, "I fear I should not be satisfied to look at happiness through other eyes only, and never through my own. To live for those I love, or to die if I lose them, is the beginning and end of my philosophy."

At these words of Imogene's, a strange expression darkened for a minute the quiet face of her sister. It was very brief, and the next instant saw her arranging the pillows of Imogene's couch, and furtively kissing the shining tresses, which, more elaborately arranged than usual, glittered on the velvet cushion.

Wentworth read the history of their lives in these words, and a yearning tenderness filled his heart for the lofty nature and gentle soul, whose all of earthly existence had been engaged in ministering to the happiness of others, and who had been so thoughtless of her own.

"But, Herbert," said Imogene, turning to him,

"you have never told us all that has happened to you since that parting at Venice. I was so ill, that the time between seems a blank. Sometimes I try and think of the past, but it is all confused; if I recall one fact, another escapes me. All I seem to hold fast is Agnes and you."

Wentworth looked inquiringly at Agnes. She bowed her head. She was anxious, if possible, to recall the past. She hoped that by so doing, some chord might be struck, which might echo with force sufficient to rouse Imogene's dormant recollections, and that thus the danger of their present mode of life might be avoided.

"On the day——"

"Ah!" said Imogene, with a cry which seemed to quiver through the room like the helpless plaint of an infant.

"You see you cannot bear it," said Wentworth, alarmed at her paleness.

"No, not yet; I must only thank God you are here," she said, taking his hand with a burst

of natural tears, which seemed to relieve her. Then, with the childish elasticity of temperament which belonged to her, she changed the subject. "But how did you and Agnes correspond? how did you know where to find us? Was it on your account that Agnes used to go out for hours, and come home sometimes so tired, sometimes so sad, and once or twice, I think, pleased?"

This was an unlucky speech. Wentworth crimsoned to the temples, and then set his face into the hard, sarcastic expression which it sometimes wore.

"You must not ask me, Imogene, to explain mysteries of which I am utterly ignorant, and concerning which, your sister permits no inquiries."

His eyes flashed.

"I was obliged to ask information of Herbert, at all sorts of times and in every place I could," answered Agnes, calmly.

"But who knows him here?" persisted Imogene.

Agnes was silent, and turned pale. However

much she distrusted Moroni, her promise never to mention his name was sacred.

"Dear Imogene," she said, caressingly, "there are some questions I cannot answer."

"My dearest Agnes," said Imogene, and she laughed her pretty musical laugh, "you shall have your mysteries; *I* have Herbert."

It was Agnes now who blushed painfully.

At this moment Mary entered, for it was late, and Imogene retired early.

Wentworth and Agnes quitted her.

"Miss Tremorne," said Wentworth, as he paused at the door of her studio, "will you let me advise you?"

"Advice is useless," she said; "I must persist in doing what I see you blame."

"Pardon me," he said, and bowing coldly, left her.

Agnes sighed, and sat lost in thought by her table. She took from her portfolio a note which Santa had brought her that very afternoon from Moroni. It ran thus:—

"Yesterday, the general of the Jesuits died, and

on Friday morning there will be high mass in his honour, in the church of the Gésu. If I can be there early enough, I will send Egidio to inform you, and you must meet me. *There are news.* There is to be a meeting of our brethren the night the Coliseum is illuminated, which may be on the same evening; and I must then certainly be in Rome. If I gain any information at that meeting for you, Madonna, I will send Santa on Saturday morning to you."

"It must be," murmured Agnes; "yet why hesitate now more than formerly; it is only for Herbert's sake. Has Mr. Wentworth so much influence that I should fear to displease him? Is it kind, is it just to suspect me as he does? and of what? Why should he seek to know, not only my secrets, but those of others? Mine I have not withheld, but on Herbert's account Moroni is sacred to me."

She again sighed deeply, and prepared some drawings for her lesson to Miss Carmichael the next day.

"I wish I could tell aunt May," she thought.

Aunt May was usually present during her niece's lessons. Her sympathy with Agnes had increased every time she had seen her. She had not sought to know her name or history, but she had won her confidence by her kindness and appreciation. For the first time, Agnes felt she possessed a friend. She often asked Agnes into her own sitting-room after the lesson, and they would talk on intellectual subjects near the hearts of both: the movement in Italy, the lovely land which was at present so defaced, the immemorial art which still was enshrined in its ancient home and the fine nature of the people, which, in spite of superstition, ignorance, fear, had certain qualities that would eventually lead to self-deliverance—patience, national pride, and unconquerable hope.

Sometimes Wentworth came to see aunt May, and it was a great pleasure to him to observe the intimacy between these two. From his earliest childhood, he had respected and loved aunt May. She observed them both, and

sometimes beguiled her long nights of pain with visions of what might be. If all romance had left the world, it would still be found in the brain of some dreamy, elderly spinster, who is sure to weave for others some of those bright dreams which have long since faded from her own colourless life.

CHAPTER XI.

Letter from LAURA CARMICHAEL *to* MRS. WENTWORTH, *Perugia.*

"DEAREST MILLICENT, Rome.

"It was a great pleasure to have your letter from England, announcing your speedy arrival here. It is pleasanter still to know that you are at Perugia. Make haste! there never was such a gay city as Rome. Balls, theatres, carnival gaieties during the winter; and since it is over, we have had the most charming picnics, excursions, and explorings. There have been loads of English and Russians; numbers of our own set (county people), and besides these, we have made the most pleasant acquaintances.

My sister is more and more disinclined to leave home. The heavy gloom which she wears on her face does not add to its attractions. She says it is no use going out to add to the garniture on the walls, for she is never asked to dance. I maintain that if she did not look so antagonistic, she would not find herself neglected; but she is obstinate, and stays more and more at home every year. Mamma has been very good-natured, and what with her and some other friends I have missed nothing for want of chaperonage. Heigho! that I should still require it! In all these gaieties there is a sprinkling of Italians, and they are very good-natured and courteous, and dance well. English manners amuse them, and, as it is the permanent idea that Englishwomen have always enormous fortunes, and are always longing to get married, one rarely finds oneself, if but decently agreeable, neglected and forlorn as in London; where, after the seasons of ten years, one's face is as known, and as little attended to at certain parties, as the knocker on the door.

"As to Rome itself I think little of it. The filth, the smells, the damp, the dreariness, quite upset one's illusions. These parks are waste places. There is a piece of pleasure-ground about as large as a London square on the Pincian Hill; the view is good from its summit, but to walk there by way of exercise is absurd. In Rome there are nothing but churches and ruins, as if the presence of the one was the natural sequence of the other; Catholic churches *bien entendu*. But I think they (the ruins) have been much overpraised. Except to scholars, they can have no interest, for they are not picturesque, and seldom well grouped. I could echo the Burchell exclamation, Fudge! when I hear people raving about them. If one attempts to grope about them, one becomes a martyr to the nameless insects which swarm everywhere in Rome, and which have given me a horror of the very name of ruins. We have been to a few studios; but to tell you the truth, I prefer the mosaic and cameo shops to the sculpture and painting 'shops.' They are but a kind of shop,

you know. In the first I can criticize what I do not like, and bargain for what I please; in the last, some dreadful-looking man with a beard, who always makes some excuse for keeping on his cap, stands looking critically at us, or talking some art jargon which I cannot comprehend. The painters' studios are so dirty and slovenly one cannot sit down without fear and trembling; the walls are all chalked over with scrawls, or sketches, or addresses; great wooden palettes, covered over with grimy colours, brushes dipped in oil and turpentine, strew the ground. Then you are sure to see huge plaster limbs in every impossible and unpleasant attitude, hanging on the walls. Sometimes a dingy curtain hangs across half the room. One is afraid of looking behind it. I peeped once and saw a brown girl, with nothing on but a red stuff petticoat, sitting on the ground eating a great piece of black bread. Round her throat was a row of red beads; her tangled hair hung about her naked shoulders; her face was like that of an Egyptian sphynx, with her deep-set, slate-coloured eyes

which looked all pupil, her level brows, and thick, well-cut, brick-coloured lips. This may be called beauty, and pleasant to paint, but it is not to my taste.

"In the evening these men appear at parties in a more Christian costume, but there is something invariably coarse about them. How can they help it? They live with models, and usually end by marrying them. Does great sensibility to beauty in external nature open a range of sensations which leads at last to sensuality? Does not this remark remind you of aunt May, not in spirit, for she has an absolute passion for artists, but in the cut and dried manner in which I put it? By-the-by, she is better than she has been for years. She has picked up the language much better than I have done. She goes out driving, and has seen a good deal of Rome. We understand each other as little as ever, though she is very kind to me, and I wish I had a chance of being as happy as she is at her age and in spite of her infirmities.

"I have seen little of Godfrey Wentworth.

He lives the most eccentric kind of life, as an artist, and entirely with artists. He goes nowhere. What mischief you caused there, Millicent! A man with such a property, too! and such a distinguished-looking fellow! Cannot you try and make it all right? I would flirt with him if he would let me, but he has such an overbearing manner, and looks so steadily at one, that I get frightened. I thought, however, I had nearly detected him in a little private flirtation, not quite *selon les règles*. He recommended me a lady to teach me painting. Mamma will not let me go to copy in the galleries, or to learn from an Italian artist. Her prejudices subsist on that subject. Well, this lady came; ladylike, refined-looking, blonde, an Englishwoman, settled in Italy for many years, but totally uninteresting, from her great reserve and coldness of manner. She evidently did not know much of Godfrey, but, oddly enough, bears a strong resemblance to him. There is a mystery about her, and aunt May has taken a great fancy to her. I think she knew some of her relatives somewhere. There is an

invalid sister or mother in the background; she is poor, of course, but has been evidently well educated. She is always alone when she comes to us, though I have sometimes recognized her very peculiar dress (why do those kind of women always dress so oddly?) in very strange places, and in very odd company. Godfrey knows little about her evidently, for I have the power of moving him whenever I mention these facts to him. He knits his brow, and his eyes flash, and he sometimes jerks out a sharp answer to poor innocent little me. But I have never seen them together, and I can never make out whether he visits her or not. Still I should say to you, make haste and come to Rome. Who knows? men are such strange, childlike beings, he may have got over his resentment, and you may resume your influence over him. How happy it would all make us to have you settled so near us! I should not be so generous, however, if I thought my dark eyes had any chance with this misanthrope; but they never had, and are not likely to do so now. He took away a drawing I had

made the other day, and I, like a good-natured fool, let him have it, wondering why he prized it, till I had remembered that unintentionally it was a striking likeness of Miss Tremorne. I had been making, with her help, some outlines for a glass window in our chapel at home—the cardinal virtues. I had diminished them from some I had seen at Siena, and of which I had engravings. There was one called 'La Perseveranza,' but I should translate it Fortitude; representing a woman seated in a most noble statuesque position, and with one hand, armed with a knife, she is amputating the other. 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off,' is on the scroll beneath; but the expression, the *pose*, the resolution and endurance, are sublime.

"An enthusiastic, yet restrained and steadfast look which I sometimes see in Miss Tremorne's face has often been recalled to me in this sketch. Mr. Wentworth must have discovered it too, for he went off with it directly I had finished it. I told him you were coming, but he took no notice of it. I know, however, he often talks to

aunt May about his uncle. What a pity Mr. Marmaduke Wentworth is such a grave, sad man! There was an ugly story about him ages ago, I believe; an elopement with a married woman; something very shocking, I know; but I think the person was an Italian, which makes quite a difference: she has been dead these ten or fifteen years, but the whole thing seems to have made an indelible impression on him. He is certain never to marry now, and you must be a great comfort to him. I do not know, after all, whether a young widow living with a rich uncle is not more independent, and altogether more to be envied, than if she married again. Aunt May is somehow connected with this mystery, but in what manner I cannot conceive, for a more quiet, subdued creature never lived. Pictures and books are her world, and nothing connects her with the living one but her charities and unfailing kindness to all. I never can find that she had the smallest notion of ever marrying; so strange: *tant mieux* for us, however,—Jane and I must come in for her money; it will eke out our

trumpery portions. My brother will be a rich man; but we should have been beggars—absolute beggars—but for this; and that which I fear most in this world is poverty. I would do anything to avoid it; but fancy an old maid, and poor! it is shocking to think of. I have made myself melancholy thinking of such things. I will finish this volume of a letter before I become more dull. Of course, my letters to you are strictly private.

"Your affectionate,

"LAURA."

MARMADUKE WENTWORTH *to* MAY CARMICHAEL.

"DEAR MAY,

"I had given orders that from the 1st instant all my letters and newspapers were to be sent to Rome; but as our journey has met with an unexpected delay, will you kindly send to

the post, and order them to be forwarded here, at Perugia?

"What first induced me to leave England I know not. Millicent, I think, seemed to wish to travel. All places are equally aimless and uninteresting to me save one, Venice, and that I shall never revisit; and I was glad to have the occupation and change.

"The Carmichaels being at Rome, are the nominal attraction to Millicent; but my pretty niece does not wear her heart on her sleeve, and the real motive may be wide of this. Godfrey's being at Rome also, may be the real and true inducement. Millicent has a profound faith in the power of her own beauty, and believes that she may still assert its fascination over Godfrey. I excuse her, for it is hard to be poor and lonely at her age and after such ambitious anticipations. I wish, for her sake, she were married. It must be sad work living with such a dull, hopeless fellow as I am, and yet she is less unprotected than if she lived alone. Millicent is pretty, and quiet, and sweet-tempered,

but she possesses, beyond any one I have ever seen, the quality of caution. She is not mysterious, but simply impenetrable. Her beauty and dimples are childlike, and yet no veteran diplomatist can more skilfully conceal the motives which guide him, or more surely contrive to do that which he has willed. I know that if she had any desire to be in Van Diemen's Land for instance, in the course of next year, by a succession of most natural circumstances, I should find myself there with her. She does not falsify facts, but she conceals all which do not suit her purpose. Silence is a great power in a woman, and she possesses it supremely. But she is pleasant to live with, and suits me in many ways.

"Our delay has been caused by something of an adventure. As we were slowly dragging towards Perugia at the end of rather a long day's journey, our horses suddenly started back and plunged aside. I believe we had all been dozing, master, mistress, maid, man, and postilions. In a minute more the postilions were down from

their horses and Coles off the box. They found that the noble instincts of the poor beasts had saved the life of a fellow-creature. They and the carriage were all but over a man who was lying right across the road. Even as it was, their start back had bruised him about the head and shoulders. He must have been insensible for some time. I jumped out, and by the light of one of the carriage lamps, saw that it was a young man in a peasant's dress, but it was ragged and torn, and his shoes were almost worn off his feet. It was a gaunt, famine-struck face; but in spite of the blood which stained it, and the dust and dirt, it was not an unpleasing countenance. He opened his eyes as we raised him up, but they seemed glazed and nearly sightless from weakness, and he sank back again. There was nothing for it but to lift him into the carriage, and drive on as fast as we could. When we drove up to the hotel, he was still insensible. I must tell you that, before remounting, one of the postilions came up to me mysteriously and whispered, so that his companion could not

hear him: 'See if he has a passport; if not, I will contrive something.' I mechanically obeyed him, found a passport and sketch-book, but not a farthing of coin of any kind. A bit of bread and a piece of chalk were all the contents of his pockets. The passport was a German one, 'Hilderich Trübner.' I showed it to the postilion. He gave the most mysterious shrug, and, pointing to a dark scar like a ring round both his naked ankles, said, *Meglio così Poveretto.* It dawned upon my mind that the man might be some escaped convict. However, my only concern was to help him, whatever were his antecedents, and I took no notice. There was no difficulty, therefore, upon arriving at Perugia. We there sent for a doctor, who said that the long faint was the result of starvation, and that fever would probably ensue.

"What was to be done? I thought of leaving some money with the landlord to be applied to his use, and a letter with our address in Rome. When he recovered his senses and gradually understood where he was, he expressed such

eagerness to get on, such a desperate resolution to do so, unfit as he was, that I felt it to be a matter of life and death, and no longer urged his stay for a few days. I placed my purse at his disposal. Walking any farther was out of the question, and the next diligence did not leave for thirty-six hours. He accepted the exact amount of his fare and expenses; and when I was about to give my card, he said,

"'No, that is unnecessary; as soon as you arrive in Rome, if you will send to this address, you will find the amount of my debt enclosed to the care of the English banker.'

"'But how if you do not know my name?'

"'Give it me, then, in a sealed envelope. I shall send it also, and you can identify it if you call on the banker, three weeks exactly from this date. Believe me, it is better that I should not know your name. Forget mine if you can.'

"It was mysterious, but I acceded. As I did so, a death-like paleness overspread his face, and he fainted again. We placed him on a bed, and he has been there ever since. For, as the doctor

predicted, fever and delirium followed. Millicent and I nursed him through that night, which neither of us thought he would have survived.

"The doctor told Millicent she had saved his life, for nothing but the constant care of feeding him at intervals of a few minutes could have kept life in that sinking frame. I suspect that though this is the fact, the doctor was not sorry to have his night watch shared by so pretty a woman. At any rate, Millicent was so pleased at her own success and so interested in the case, that we agreed to stop and see him out of danger, and the probabilities are, he will, if he lives, accompany us to Rome. He is young, and not ill-looking, though it is almost impossible to judge. His hair is cut close to his head, he has not shaved evidently for days, and his skin seems burnt through and through from exposure. His emaciation is frightful. It may be he has suffered from political difficulties. Though his name is German he is, I think, an Italian. When I addressed him in German he answered in Italian. These poor Italians! when will they

refrain from their Quixotic attempts? The profound distrust I have in myself may make me desponding as to all public matters, but it seems to me that for good or ill we can individually do nothing. We can neither help nor retard God's work. Yet I cannot but admire the ineradicable life still left in this quivering Italy, after years of such heavy, soul-crushing oppression. Do the cannon of Lodi still sound in their ears? With all its reckless horrors and perversion from its first principles, what a vitality in the *idea* of the great French Revolution! Wherever its soldiers marched, they scattered some seed from it, which will in time bear fruit. In England we move onwards by the slow constitutional advance of the masses; in other countries, I observe that progress is made by the rapid strides of the few or the one, which the rest are driven to keep up with or overtake; but it is curious to compare the comparative equality of progress in all, if we embrace great cycles of time. Thus I speculate, while others act their parts in the drama of life. This poor

fellow, for instance, has had a hand-to-hand struggle with it evidently. His has been defeat, mine failure. Which is worst to bear? Mine, for mine is brought on by myself. I often wonder how it would have been if you and I, May—but it is in vain to wonder now. Do not let those nieces of yours hang about us too much when we are in Rome. Laura, especially, is the kind of woman who overpowers me. So much empty occupation and one-sided intelligence;—so little or no heart, and such an absence of real refinement, with so much conventional appearance of it, I especially dislike in women. The aimless activity of the squirrel and the malice of the cat, when combined, are insupportable. I intend to see Godfrey. Life is too brief for enduring resentments, and you and he are the only two beings for whom I feel affection, and towards whom I have no distrust. If I die before I have discovered whether Imogene's child still lives, he is my heir. God bless you, dear May.

"M. WENTWORTH.

"P.S.—If you can make inquiries about the Tremornes, it would oblige me much. I could not do so myself; and yet it seems, that if I could but once see *her* child I should be happier. Without even becoming known, I might befriend her. You, who have never failed me, whose hand never dropped mine, but by my own fault, and for my own loss, will, I know, aid me in this. It seems to me I have such a debt to repay to the child I robbed of her mother! Farewell."

MAY CARMICHAEL *to* MARMADUKE WENTWORTH.

"DEAR MARMADUKE,

"I have forwarded your letters, as you wished, and add a line to tell you that I have accidentally fallen upon the very people you have been so long in search of, Imogene's child

and her sister Agnes. They have been in Rome four years. The father is dead; they have had great trouble, and it is altogether a sad history. I shall tell you all when we meet. For the present I shall only tell you that the young Imogene has been and still is an invalid. She received a great shock, and was for months, I may say for years, all but helpless, with an impaired memory and enfeebled eyesight. She is now better. She has been successfully magnetized by—whom do you think?—Godfrey Wentworth! She is able to move, she remembers more distinctly, and can occupy herself. In the course of a month or so, she will, I think, be quite herself. Her beauty is wonderful. Her sister Agnes has been everything to her. Agnes is morally one of the rarest creatures I have ever seen; so much depth, yet so much evenness; so much power, yet so much softness; her life is so inflexible in its acceptation of duty, so yielding in its interpretation of love. The manner in which she devotes herself to Imogene is marvellous, when one thinks of the amount of

work she does also. Such a life might be arid and cheerless anywhere else, but it is tempered here by all those simple yet exquisite enjoyments which are so accessible in this southern climate. A walk or drive in the Campagna, returning home laden with some of the beautiful flowers which carpet it in every direction, is enough to bring a colour to Agnes' cheek and a light in her eyes. In these fine organizations, the aptitude to receive pleasant impressions is invincible, while the faith to which they attain enables them to endure and overcome the sorrows to which they are so keenly susceptible. *Fiat voluntas tua* seems to be written on Agnes' heart. My life, which has had so little calamity outwardly to contend with, and which knows no trial but bodily illness, and the somewhat dreary sense of solitude and uselessness, which are its concomitants, has never had to contend with a hundredth part of the difficulties which are of daily occurrence to Agnes; but in my gayest days of youth I never attained that serenity which in her seems habitual.

She has retained, in spite of all her trials, a singleness and freshness of heart which is admirable. No grief, I think, could permanently sour or dispirit her. The household consists of herself, her sister, and a most excellent English servant, who was her nurse. This woman is devoted to her two mistresses, but her astonishment at all that surrounds her, her never-failing disgust at being, as it were, compelled to live out of England, is most amusing. It is much the same prejudice which embitters my sister-in-law's residence here, and the manifestations in both are remarkable. My dreamy life makes me adapt myself more easily to change of place. Books teach one to be a cosmopolite. It seems to me that I have a wider toleration and deeper charity than persons who, by leading more active lives, come into actual contact with ignorance and vice. I believe my sister thinks me immoral, from the extreme mildness of some of my judgments. But the fact is, we view life from different points: much which the world excuses as faults, I condemn as crimes; much which the world stigma-

given to crime. I make allowance for it now. I am as inexorable to the first as I was always to the last. To all which systematically lessens one's nature and lowers one's aspirations, I would be severe and uncompromising: but we are all liable to sudden temptations, which lead to sins no sooner committed than repented of, and towards these my indulgence is perhaps too tender. My mode of life may, however, account for this. An existence spent for the best part on a couch must always lack in personal experience, though perhaps it is this fact which frees us from all acerbity or one-sidedness in our judgments.

"I have been so much better that I drive out almost daily, and with a little judicious arrangement have contrived to see a great deal of Rome. No words can describe its beauty. It is a beauty which affects the heart as well as the imagination and senses. One learns to love it; and, having found these Tremornes—this Agnes, for whom I have such a mixture of feelings, compassion, tenderness, reverence;—makes me consider our visit here peculiarly fortunate. You are right, you

can *never* see them, but it makes me sad to think so.

"I have seen, and do see, a good deal of Godfrey; he is very dear to me. Stern as he is to most, no son could be kinder or more considerate than he is to me. These years of travel have been of great use to him. He has entirely lost that 'insular' view of things which is such a drawback in some of the most intelligent Englishmen; he is indefatigable in his studies and researches, and when he returns and settles himself in England, which he talks of doing soon, I think both his public and private career will be distinguished and useful. I have watched him and Agnes Tremorne closely; I should say they were made for each other: both being so serious and resolute, possessing such large and thoughtful minds and such generous and affectionate hearts. At present I am sure that Agnes loves Godfrey —of this I have an intuitive perception—and also that she is unconscious of it. He, I am sure, loves her also; but with him there is some struggle going on, which prevents the free growth of his

love. I feel confident it will all come right in the end: they are both of an age to be above all childish misunderstandings.

"You see I have lost neither my castle-building propensities, nor my sanguineness. I wish I could be as happy about the prospects of my nieces. Laura is as opposed as ever to all which does not feed her vanity, or stimulate her ardour for amusement. The miserable little projects and ambitions of the hour occupy her entirely, and her very intelligence gives a zest to vapid pleasures, which would soon pall on a duller nature. She has no delicacy of feeling, and little heart, and she is resolved to marry. It is probable she will succeed somehow or other. Jane, who is so much less popular—indeed, absolutely disliked—is to me much more interesting. Beneath that crust of bitterness and gloom, produced by disappointment, a heart has throbbed and felt. All my fear is that she will either harden more and more, or escape from her present sterile existence through the narrow gate of a bigoted and self-exalting superstition. I fear she will

become one of those rigid tormentors of children in Sunday-schools, and pharisaical visitors of poor cottages, who have a power of reproving wrong, but are utterly useless in teaching right. I try to soothe and soften her, but hitherto with ill-success. I have endeavoured to make her acquainted with Agnes, but in vain; she observes her, but will not talk to her.

"You are right in what you say of Millicent. In spite of the good qualities I recognize in her, that sort of character is very objectionable to me. It is vain for her to think of regaining her influence over Godfrey. He has passed into a phase of thought and feeling quite beyond her reach.

"The desponding tone of your letter pained me much. It is not good for you to travel in Italy. Why not bring Millicent to Rome, and then return? Godfrey mentioned some business he thought would oblige you to do so. You would be spared all the pain of avoiding Agnes and her sister, and I would fulfil all your wishes towards them. Think of this. Your invalid

position will be well enough to leave you, when you arrive: if not, Millicent shall have every assistance she requires. Always, dear Marmadake,

"Your affectionate,

"MAY."

CHAPTER XII.

We often dignify our actions with high-sounding names which they ill deserve. This masquerading goes on to a greater extent than we are aware of. It would be amusing sometimes, sometimes painful, to strip off the royal disguises beneath which are cloaked very mean qualities. Who was it that said, motives were like the suits worn by a harlequin, several are under the exterior one? How often generosity masks vanity; good-nature, weakness; polished sweetness, indifference and hardness; and, most fatal of all, self-sacrifice, self-indulgence.

As little as we know the real worth of our acts, can we imagine whither they will tend. What we conceive will be for the benefit of those

we love, may in truth be injurious to them, and they may be withdrawn from our tenderness, to be disciplined into good, through some process which was not within our scope. The indulgence we bestowed on them may have been as bad for their moral health, as if we fed a child on sugar. It will require many a bitter draught before health and tone is restored to its being.

In the maze of responsibility and of uncertainty which encircles us on all sides, we can hold fast but to one rock—*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra.*

If, from the wish of doing better than what is allowed in the strict path of duty, we swerve from it, we sin not the less surely that the sin is disguised under the specious garb of self-sacrifice or generosity. Agnes should not have consented to the prolongation of Imogene's error.

Meanwhile Imogene was gaining health. She could move a little; more colour was on her cheek and lips, but her memory remained uncertain and feeble.

Mary observed with pain that as the younger Miss Tremorne regained the rosy tints habitual to her, her elder sister grew paler and paler. Deep lines of care and thought were marked on her forehead, and the whole contour of her face seemed sunk and hollow. She had heard nothing of or from Herbert. Neither Carlo Moroni nor Egidio had returned to Rome. The very thought of Carlo Moroni, from some inexplicable cause, had become distasteful and repulsive to her. From no source came hope or comfort to Agnes.

At times she felt almost confused herself between the true and false Herbert;—the likeness was so strong in feature and in general air, though the expression was in some respects so different. But this expression was only apparent to those who knew the different characters of the two men. Less profound or acute observers were immediately struck with the likeness.

It is a curious study that of resemblances. How few of us see each other in outward shape as we really are! Soul sees soul; but photo-

graphs and all exact material resemblances must ever fail to portray our inner being.

But besides this resemblance between Wentworth and Herbert, the circumstances were not wholly dissimilar. The same drama seemed to be acted over again, but the scene was now in Rome, not in Venice. And then the two lovers! Everything seemed real, yet unreal. Nevertheless to Agnes there was a great difference. The tender, humble, almost adoring reverence of Herbert was wholly unlike the fitful manner of Wentworth, who, though always occupied with her, was yet often antagonistic, if such a word may be used; and though he served both sisters with the utmost self-devotion, yet he was often suspicious, and cold, and stern to Agnes.

As Agnes knew nothing of Moroni's general character, she could not have understood (even had she been aware of it) the bitterness with which Wentworth thought of her intercourse with such a man. Two persons of such strength and decision of character as they both were, could not but find this reserve a difficulty and a hin-

drance, in so close an intimacy as the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed fostered and increased.

Agnes guarded her secret diligently, and resented his suspicions. Wentworth was not of a jealous temper, in the ordinary sense of the word, but of a jealous heart. He could not endure to think that there was another person who had the right to serve Agnes, and to fill up a place in her life prohibited to him. He was of too imaginative a temperament not to indulge in conjectures which only tended to increase his distrust. His experience of woman's nature had not been favourable, and he was not likely to lean to the most charitable interpretation of doubtful appearances. Godfrey Wentworth had the faults which are ever in the train of virtues like his. He was true, frank, but was also uncompromising and severe. He saw black and white clearly; but to his vision the grays and neutral tints of many characters and most actions seemed darker than they were. To those he loved he would have given freely out of the abundance of his own rich nature;

but he was chilled and irritated if he found that the measure of trust and love was meted out grudgingly to himself. Besides, his feelings for Agnes were growing unconsciously out of the friendly proportions he professed. Imogene's extraordinary beauty, the mournful interest attaching to her situation, and the power which he possessed over her, had at first appealed to his heart; for no man could have been insensible to all which most charms the senses and inspires them with delight. But, deep in his nature, there was an undercurrent of sympathy and interest which hung round every look, gesture, and tone of her pale sister. His love belonged without retrieval to Agnes. She, in spite of her reserve, in spite of the steady resolution with which she sought to command herself, was the first to discover how much of her heart, also, was flowering into life again, beside one who, with the outward presentment of the only man she had ever loved, had all the qualities of mind and soul which were more valuable to her maturer nature. But, like most people whose lives are busy with thought and

care for others, she was unaware of the force of her own feelings.

One afternoon, Wentworth accidentally met the Carmichaels at the Villa Albani. He was copying that divine Antinous crowned with lotus, which is over the fireplace of one of the rooms, and could not escape. Miss Carmichael rushed to him, and began volubly discoursing on art, and Rome, and England, and things in general. She then suddenly diverged, after a long list of her own achievements, to her painting and thence to Agnes.

"Do you know, Mr. Wentworth, she has much less talent than I expected."

"Indeed!" Wentworth's voice was as incisive as steel, but Miss Carmichael was callous.

"Ladylike and refined she certainly is, but her drawings have less merit than I supposed."

She saw that Wentworth was meditating escape, but she knew the spell by which she could retain him at her side, and was resolved that he should escort her to her carriage; she went on therefore,—

"There is something very mysterious, too, about her. The other day my music-master, Felice Moroni, was announced while she was with me. She turned so pale that I thought she would have fallen off her chair, and she then rose crimson to the temples and said, 'Will you excuse me? I must go home.' She gave no reason, but you know her grand manner, which admits of no objection or remonstrance. I must say, I was malicious enough to keep her under pretext of helping her with that hideous cloak of hers till he entered; and then to my surprise it was evident he had never seen her before. She did not look towards him till he spoke, and then she seemed surprised and relieved. I asked him after she was gone if he had ever heard of her, and he said, 'No.' Well, that very afternoon, we were coming from St. Peter's, and in one of the streets near the Via Tor di Nona, I saw that strange cloak in earnest conversation with a most brigandish individual. It may have been a model, to be sure; what do you think, Mr. Wentworth?"

"Good morning," said Wentworth, as they

reached the gate, and he hastened on as if he had not heard her question.

"How absent and stern he looked, did he not, mamma? I never knew any one so altered."

"That's what I always say," said Mrs. Carmichael, who invariably echoed her clever daughter's sayings, but sometimes feebly pretended to originate them; "but make haste, Laura; you know we have an engagement at four."

Wentworth was in a decidedly ill temper as he went homewards with his hat pulled over his brows, and tapping his boots with his stick as he went along.

As he passed the church of the Gésu, his attention was attracted by a crowd assembled outside, and as he looked he saw the figure of Agnes Tremorne ascend the steps accompanied by Moroni. An irresistible impulse compelled him to follow. He entered the church, but could not get near her, so dense was the crowd, but she turned suddenly and recognized him. In the face of Wentworth was a rigid look which Agnes knew well; in that of Agnes there was a

reproach which irritated Wentworth. But Agnes made no salute. For worlds she would not have excited the notice of Moroni. A movement of the crowd separated them, and he saw her no longer.

Wentworth stood with folded arms amid the mass. He was conspicuous by his height and bearing, and many whispers of "*Forestiere*" were heard around him. He despised himself for being vexed; he hated himself for the mean feeling that planted such sharp talons in his heart; but he could not free himself from the circle of self-torture in which his thoughts were bound.

The crowd was thickening every moment. Many seemed lifted off their feet from the pressure. It surged towards some central point, and Wentworth was carried with it. There, beneath the dome of the church, a belt of light was formed by a ring of enormous wax torches, and it blazed like a glory. Beyond these were ranged, in a circle, a crowd of kneeling monks, and behind them, and in front of the crowd, a detachment of Pontifical soldiers, in close file.

The music pealed from the organs, and now and then a chorus of melancholy and piercing voices sustained a chant of heart-breaking pathos. Some of the most thrilling notes at last found their way to Wentworth's feelings, locked up as they had been from the surrounding scene, and he started as from a dream.

At first his dazzled eyes could distinguish nothing, but soon he was able to discern, in the midst of the blaze of light, a catafalque, and on its summit an open coffin. The face of the dead man within was visible. The poor features looked old, and pinched, and worn; the fight with life had been a hard one, to judge from the deep lines under the eyes and mouth, as if strong cordage had been pressed into the skin. But it was all over now as regards this life and the poor tenement in which the fight had been fought and the defeat endured.

Wentworth was reminded, by the contrast which the poor face, with its deprecating and sad stillness, presented to the apotheosis around, of the Legend of St. Bruno.

"St. Bruno, when a young, gay man, met a procession, bearing in great honour the body of some deceased bishop. He was deeply struck with the respect and homage paid to the deceased, who had a world-wide reputation for virtue and sanctity; but, to the horror of all, the corpse raised itself from the bier, and in a piercing voice called out, 'Condemnatus sum!' The world honoured the sanctity of the outward life, but his secret sins had found him out. The effect on St. Bruno was miraculous. He judged himself, and thought, 'If this holy man has not been able to achieve his salvation, what will become of me, after my self-indulging, self-corrupting life?' He reformed, and spent the rest of his life in the odour of sanctity, as the Church knows."

Wentworth's thoughts turned from the pageant to the world beyond, which the real man, whose corpse he was looking upon, had reached—the world which was parted, as by a great gulf, from all these prostrate worshippers. There came to him a recollection of the words heard in childhood, long

ago, in the old country church while, he sat impatiently thinking of his dogs and bats, and chafing at the length of the service, wearied and inattentive; yet the words had sunk into the record of his memory, for they echoed loud now: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." "My peace I give, *not as the world* giveth, give I unto you." That was a promise to which all were looking forward; and his own heart, which had but now throbbed so fiercely, was soothed as by the pressure of a still, calm hand.

But such emotions are temporary, and by the time he had disentangled himself from the crowd, there was the same feeling of disquiet in his mind. He waited outside, but saw no traces of Agnes and her companion.

At length he returned home. In the evening, remembering Miss Carmichael had mentioned that she was going to the Coliseum, which would keep her out till late, he called to see aunt May. She was in the drawing-room, and, to his infinite surprise, the lady who sat by the side of the invalid's low sofa was Agnes Tre-

morne. Neither he nor Agnes could avoid a certain coldness in their greetings, which irritated him still more.

"I asked Miss Tremorne to spend a quiet evening with me. My sister and nieces have gone to see the Coliseum, which is illuminated to-night, and they will not be home before midnight," said aunt May. "I am glad you have come too, Godfrey."

Wentworth began describing the scene he had witnessed in the morning.

"It was a ceremony in honour of the interment of the general of the Jesuits," said Agnes; "but it all seemed to me false, theatrical, and profane."

"Do you know the old Arab saying, 'And this too passes, or thou wilt pass.' I was forcibly reminded of it when I looked at the face of that poor old man; he seemed to have survived so much. It was like looking at a battle-field after it has been deserted, with its traces of strife and suffering, though the struggle which it witnessed has become a thing of the past."

"But it will be renewed elsewhere," said aunt May.

"Yes, that is the pity of it."

"Godfrey!"

"Surely he must have won his rest. I imagine at the end of this 'grim warfare in the name of God,' he must have desired death, as a labourer after a long day's work desires sleep."

"In the new world to which death is the portal, we shall drop that feeling of fatigue with the old garments which we leave on its threshold."

"Do you know, aunt May, I could fancy I heard Marmaduke Wentworth speaking. He thinks precisely as you do."

The mention of certain names will sometimes produce an unexpected silence. All the glow in aunt May's countenance faded at the name of Marmaduke. She had been speaking with unusual animation.

"Marmaduke and I have often talked of these things," she said, after a pause; and she then sighed and leant back on her couch, and covered her face with her thin hands. They were all quite

still for a few minutes; aunt May was the first to recover herself. "My especial reason," she commenced, "for asking Miss Tremorne here was, because this day is a sad anniversary to me, and is not unconnected, I think, with her. There is a question which has been on my lips ever since I first saw you. Open that desk, will you, Godfrey, and take out a little miniature case in it."

He did so. Aunt May opened the spring, and showed the portrait inside to Wentworth and Agnes. With one breath they both exclaimed,—

"Imogene!"

"Mamma!" said Agnes.

Aunt May took Agnes' hand and held it fast.

"You, then, are her step-daughter? She died fifteen years ago this very day."

Agnes could not speak, she was looking so fondly at the little miniature, so fraught with sad and sweet remembrances. At last she spoke.

"How did you know her?"

"I will tell you," said aunt May; "but you

must not mind hearing a little of my former history; it is also connected with her."

"I will leave you," said Godfrey: the sight of the miniature had explained to him an event in his uncle's life, and revealed to him its connection with the Tremornes. He felt that in the story aunt May was about to tell, it was best there should be no auditor but Agnes. "I will return in an hour."

CHAPTER XIII.

"I WILL be as rapid as I can," said au
"but so strange an accident it is, that
I, Agnes, should, strangers as we are,
together by our great affection for ano
I must dwell as it were on the prepa
this attachment, which my own story pre

"They say that all lives touch each
some point, so indissoluble is the chain o
hood which God himself has ordaine
might be instructive to trace these
through many intricate passages til
the intersecting point.

"At sixteen years of age, I
creature as could be. I was
but I was independent, and he

I lived with a large family of orphan brothers and sisters, presided over by a widowed aunt. I was the fourth girl. My eldest brother was much younger than three of my sisters, and till he attained his majority we lived at the Hall. Marmaduke Wentworth's father was our guardian. As I was the fourth daughter and no beauty, little attention was paid me. I was passionately fond of reading: we had an extensive library, and every table in the drawing-room was covered with the poems and romances of the day, and my taste was therefore amply gratified. I lived in quite an ideal world, not figuratively, but absolutely. The outward world, with all its complex contradictions of human character, was an unfathomable mystery to me. I was considered a bookworm, and left to my fate. I was very good-natured, and if my sisters or brothers required anything of me, I never refused, but such occasions were rare, for I was usually pronounced stupid, and was left to my own devices. The love passages which occurred in our family were either unknown to me, or pre-

sented such contrasts to all that I had read and dreamed of that passion, that they did not seem worthy of the name. Why it was, that the heroism, the tenderness, the genius, of which I read were so entirely confined to books, and so little apparent in the world, was sometimes a matter of conjecture to me, but usually I was contented to turn from prosaic realities to the fairy fictions which portrayed such a different existence.

"The least romantic person could have seen nothing in my own surroundings to excite an imaginative instinct, with the exception of one individual alone, my guardian, Horace Wentworth. He was accomplished, handsome, distinguished; his wife had been the most beautiful woman in the county, and had died, leaving him four sons. Her death had afflicted him so much, that he had lived ever since in complete retirement. When he came occasionally to see us, it was like a vision of my own peculiar world flashing upon my matter-of-fact existence; such a lordly manner, such great personal beauty,

such genius, belonged not to every-day life. No one else at home liked him; he was thought proud, stern, cold, and I therefore never uttered what I felt; but to me, he was a being to be worshipped. The follies this religion, or rather this pagan idolatry, led me to commit, are too numerous to be mentioned here, though there would be something touching to you, were I to relate the simplicity, the self-devotion, the self-abnegation they manifested. I never sought to attract his attention, but if he spoke to me, if in any way he noticed me, I felt transfigured; if he spoke of a book, I instantly read it; if he had occasion to write a note to my aunt or to any of us, I manœuvred to get possession of it, and it became a hoarded relic. He once made some outlines, in pen and ink, for an ornamental gate in our grounds—how I treasured them! He brought us all some little presents after a journey he had taken in Italy—mine was a little alabaster basket; I have it still. I remember once hearing some persons of the neighbourhood speak disparagingly of him, and in a condemnatory manner

of his religious principles; I burst into tears, and rushed from the room. I could multiply such instances without end. He took little notice of me individually, until one day, which was memorable to me ever after. I was reading as usual, seated on the wall of a terrace, which commanded the finest view of the county, and totally blind and deaf to everything around me. Suddenly a hand was placed on the page.

"'What are you reading, May?'

"I started.

"'Do not be afraid, child.'

"He it was. Mr. Wentworth took the book from my hand. As he did so, a paper fell from the leaves. He picked it up, and before I could stop him, he had read it through.

"'I saw they were verses,' he said, apologetically; 'yours?'

"My looks answered him. I was dreadfully confused. He took my hand, and spoke to me, oh! so kindly, so approvingly, so encouragingly.

"If I were asked to single out the moment of purest unalloyed happiness in my life, it was

this, when the one being I worshipped acknowleged an interest and manifested a sympathy for me —*me*.

The golden clouds of the sunset wrapped not the sky before us in so glorious an illumination, as his words and presence my transfigured spirit. When he left, I felt wings to my feet. It was late; I walked up and down on the lawn before the house in a transport. When at last I went to my room, the rapture was still at my heart, the glow upon my brow. I went to bed early, but not to rest; I lay with the moonlight pouring into my room; I watched the tracery of the leaves of the trees outside on the floor. My heart was jubilant with life and hope, and grateful adoration. It was the month of May; it was soon light. By the earliest dawn I was dressed, and I slipped out into the garden. The morning dews refreshed my spirit, fevered with happiness. St. Pierre's Virginia had not a more mystic sense of ineffable delight glowing in her veins— when she rose in those tropic nights to plunge

in the cool waters of the stream—than I when pacing my garden in that quiet, delicious hour. Oh! that May morning, with the scent of its lilacs, and the dew on the laburnum walks! There are moments when the past seems as dim and unreal as the future. In both, there are angel figures moving with haloes on their heads and flowers in their hands; but girt by the bare facts of the present, we are unable to realize the idea that such bright visions can possibly belong to us. Such we were in youth, such may we be in Paradise."

Aunt May leaned back and paused.

"After that day, Mr. Wentworth came oftener to the house; I pursued my studies with redoubled ardour. He noticed me much more; he became aware, in a measure, of his influence over me, and exercised it. After a time, his son Marmaduke returned from college, and he brought him to the house. He was his favourite son. Marmaduke was delicate in health, and his disposition presented certain peculiarities, which made his father anxious about him. I was dis-

appointed in him; he was a feminine likeness of his father. Still I took an interest in him that I accorded to no one else who came to the Hall. The same influence which had moulded my mind and tastes had formed his. It was not extraordinary that there was an almost entire sympathy in our tastes and intellectual disposition, though he had genius and I had none. He used to come often to the house; I became his favourite. He sought out my eye when he entered the room, and my side when he took a seat; he would confide to me all his youthful follies and scrapes, and all his literary secrets were confided to me. He told me of his loves—their name was legion—and I sympathized, advised, blamed, encouraged, as the case might be. I at last learned to love him tenderly. He was sent to travel for his health. After a lengthened tour on the Continent, he returned, utterly changed—broken in health, miserable at heart. After some time he confessed the cause to me. He had fallen desperately in love with a Venetian actress; they had had some difference,

and, both high-spirited and rash, had parted in anger. A few days after their parting she had written to him. He sent back the note unopened. He had no sooner done so than he repented; he flew to her, but she, in her turn, was obdurate, and would not admit him. The next thing he heard of her was, that she was married to an Englishman, much older than herself, who lived in Venice for purposes of study. She left the stage, and he never saw her again. He was in despair. His father grieved over him, and came to me. 'May, if you have any influence over him, exert it now—save him. A woman can comfort and uphold him now, when sterner counsel would fail.' Thus urged, I spared no pains—I was everything to him—his companion in his walks, and rides, and drives. I thought of no consequences; I only wished to obey his father; that father to whom I felt so reverently grateful; I was thankful I could be of some use to his son. Sorrow and disappointment have disciplined Marmaduke's character, and he always had fine qualities, but at this period of

life those who loved him had much to bear. It is said few persons, if there be nothing sterling in their own characters, can bear the weight of another's entire love; but it is very hard, I think, to the best of us—and I was a very faulty creature—to bear the whole weight of another's *life*, without any claim or part in it, but that which belongs to sympathy. Marmaduke has since responded to my tender affection for him, but at this particular time he saw nothing in the whole world but his own irremediable sorrow; felt nothing, but his own bitter and unrequited love!

"Oh! how I fought for that soul, as if to save it had been my predestined mission; as if to win it from sin were my God-given heritage; as if its salvation were the price of my own. I failed, as all must fail. I thought then, that had I been calmer, colder, humbler, I might have succeeded; now I acknowledge that nothing would have earned success. One human being cannot redeem another! God only can do that. All we can do is to help each other to bear our burdens, but it is vain presumption to seek

to lift them from where He has placed them. To die for a friend is easy; the difficulty is to teach him how to live; the impossibility is to give him life, if life be wanting. This I sought to do. I threw myself in the breach between him and his sorrow, and was defeated.

"One of my brothers, a very clever youth, much younger than myself, for some reason I could not define, for he was attached and engaged to a girl whom he subsequently married, did all in his power to thwart and oppose me. He saw that, in the continual effort to minister to Marmaduke's happiness, and to lead a life so different from my habitual one, my health was giving way, and that my nerves were in an irritable and excited state, which made the slightest contradiction an irritation and trial; yet he spared me no provocation or contradiction. My influence over Marmaduke had been chiefly owing, he afterwards said, to my cheerfulness and sunniness of temper. How was it now clouded and soured! What reports, what tales, what slander, were divulged to me! I was sworn to secrecy,

and told—and that which was told was proved—of every species of delinquency of Marmaduke's. His errors were serious enough, God knows, but not so dark as they were represented. I was assured that the improvement which had taken place in his health and spirits, was not owing to his having discarded his fatal love, but because he had renewed correspondence with its object, and that he deceived *me*, because his vanity was flattered by my evident devotion to *him*.

"I can feel even now the hot indignation which rushed from heart to brain at such an imputation. I, who had so often told him of my love, with the frankness of a sister, to be accused of a feeling, in itself guiltless, but which would have been monstrous in our situation towards each other. Had my free service needed these wages? That which was sweet and noble and pure, tendered as I had tendered it, became vile, if I had toiled for another guerdon than his own enfranchisement from evil. How much mortification and grief I then folded in my heart, silently, and without giving any sign, is only

known to myself. Others saw an exaggerated, or a pitiful self-sorrow in those '*cris d'aigle blessé*,' which sometimes escaped me. They were but faint manifestations of the iron within my soul.

"There are few undeserved sorrows which sting so acutely as a sense of outraged generosity. How often in sleepless nights did I commune with my own heart, and severely question it! It always rendered the same answer: at any moment I should have gladly welcomed Marmaduke as my own flesh and blood, my brother, my son, had such been possible, without revolt or yearning. Could this be love? No; that May night had taught me better; that glorious dawn, with its wondrous promise and unearthly beauty, might have matured into love; but, alas! that morning had never known a day, and my *libro d'oro* was for ever closed.

"I felt so wounded, that, in spite of myself, I became alienated from Marmaduke. He was surprised, shocked, hurt, and, finally, angry. Now that I was so changed, he rebelled against my advice, and set aside my wishes. We had dis-

cussions, in which I was unnecessarily severe, in order that he might not remain in his error; and yet all the time my heart was melting within me, for I felt what suffering he was bringing down upon himself. The sin of a guilty love is not so much even in the fact itself, as in all its concomitants—treachery, falsehood, dissimulation—and in the degradation and perversion of principle and feeling which they bring with them.

"If women would but reflect that in such cases they must make their choice between the love and the man: if they accept the love, they ruin the man! At last, one morning, his father came over to us, pale and agitated. Marmaduke had gone to Italy without a word—without a farewell. Mr. Wentworth turned to me.

"'May, I so trusted you! Poor boy, what will become of him, if your friendship has been powerless to save him?'

"There was no reproach in his words; it was a kind of mournful surprise. I left the room. I had only time to reach my own, before I fainted away. I had a nervous fever, which kept me ill

for months, during which I never left my bed, and which laid the foundation of the invalid state to which I was ultimately reduced. As soon as I was a little better, entire change of air was recommended. I went abroad with an aunt. One evening, at Dresden, we went to the theatre; I sat at the back of the box, still and sad, as usual. Suddenly, I saw all eyes directed to a box, into which some people were entering; I mechanically looked too. A woman entered first; she wore a loose, white Cashmere cloak; and there was a blue ribbon in her hair. She turned round, and I saw her face. I had never dreamed of such beauty! Beside her, looking paler, thinner, older, was Marmaduke Wentworth. I sat quite still. It never occurred to me to doubt who it was; but how was she there with him, and alone? He looked very ill, and very unhappy; but with what adoring eyes he watched her. When I got home I found a letter from Mr. Wentworth, which had been following me for weeks. It told me that his son had eloped with the object of his first attachment.

"'We have failed miserably,' said the letter; 'but I know him, and I know how he will suffer. May, do not forsake him, should he need you.'

"This was the last letter I ever received from Mr. Wentworth: he died soon after. He left me in his will a ring, which he had worn ever since his wife's death. He had taken it off her finger when they laid her in her coffin. I still wear it.

"We returned home. I had suffered much, but I had conquered, as all must do who have no stinging remorse to add to the regret of failure. My own family were dispersed, but my eldest brother would never hear of my leaving the Hall. I have lived with him ever since.

"For two years we none of us heard of Marmaduke. About that time I was staying at Hastings with a friend. One afternoon, as I was going out for a solitary walk on the beach, I saw an invalid chair drawn up before the next house. A servant was arranging some pillows in it, and a gentleman lifted in a slight, fragile-looking woman.

Whether the sunshine, or the sudden effect of the air was too much, I do not know, but just as they were moving on, the lady fainted. There was a little confusion. The gentleman looked round helplessly: it was Marmaduke: and the lady was she whom I had seen with him in the theatre at Dresden,—changed, pale, but beautiful now as then. I obeyed the impulse of the moment, and flew to them.

"'Let me help you,' I said.

"He looked at me without surprise, and allowed me to assist him. I acted so instinctively, that it was not till her head was on my shoulder that the recollection of all that had passed since Marmaduke and I had met, returned to me. We supported her into the house, I laid her on a sofa, I rubbed her hands, I loosened her mantle, I untied her bonnet. At last she recovered consciousness, and looked surprised at the stranger who was hanging over her.

"'It is May,' said Marmaduke, tenderly, in Italian. 'You have heard of her, have you not, Imogene?'

"She blushed, I turned pale, but there was a warm gush of indescribable emotions in my heart. Had I met her triumphant, in the bloom of health and beauty, I should have withdrawn sadly and reprovingly; but this suffering and repentant woman appealed to my softest and tenderest feelings. Could I condemn where Christ himself has forgiven? My Agnes, I learnt to love her so much, that you will pardon me if I jar on *your* feelings of love for her by even alluding to such things.

"'Nay,' said Agnes, who was flushed with agitation, 'my father on his deathbed told me what he suspected; but he also told me he had forgiven her. But Imogene must never know it.'

"So commenced my acquaintance," resumed aunt May, "with the most beautiful and gifted creature I ever knew. But she was dying. Such love as they both felt for each other I never witnessed. Where were all my romances now? The tragedy I now witnessed was more heart-breaking than any I had ever read. I heard her history, though

she never would tell me her husband's name. The only thing she had taken with her from Venice, was a little sketch of a place called the Grange, where her husband had once lived. It was done by her little step-daughter. She honoured, revered, esteemed her husband, but she spoke of you, Agnes, as the little angel of the home she abandoned—the little angel who was more worthy than she was of caring for her babe. She spoke of you as Agnese, and made me familiar with your name.

"Marmaduke felt that, but for their quarrel and his hasty departure, all would have been saved, and the inextricable coil of regret and sorrow which his own impetuous hands had linked round them, would have been spared. His remorse was acute. She suffered even more. She could not outlive her own sense of wrong committed. She had had but an imperfect education; but, save in this fatal dereliction, she was pure and truthful. She repented the wrong to Marmaduke. Had she forgiven him, all would have been saved. She had been false to him first, she said, but she

absolutely loathed herself for her deceit towards her husband. Her heart bled when she thought of her little child, and she would weep with passionate abandonment. She said she was almost crazy when she left Venice, and I can well believe it. I stayed at Hastings till she died. I went to see her, and read to her to the last. It was in my arms she fell asleep." Aunt May's voice broke off with a half-sob. Agnes stooped and kissed her hand. Her own tears fell fast.

"With her dying breath she charged me, if I ever came to Italy, to seek you out, to inquire for her child.

"The fatigue and anxiety I underwent during her illness completed my own prostration of strength. I have never been anything but a confirmed invalid since. When we came abroad, I asked for you in Venice, in vain; but when I saw you here, there was something in your appearance, that wavy bright hair which she had so often described to me, in that picture which Laura purchased, and which was a facsimile of

the Grange, that made me think I had met with you at last."

Aunt May paused for a few minutes, and then went on:—

"Marmaduke has always expressed the greatest interest in both of you, half jealous, and half pitying. But for him, Imogene's mother might have been spared to her. A thousand reasons, connected with the probability of your father being still alive, prevented him from seeking you out himself; but I know that his Imogene's child is the only person who will inherit such possessions as he may have to leave. We correspond, but have rarely met. He is a changed and blighted man."

Wentworth had re-entered noiselessly, and had heard the last sentences.

"I always liked and valued Marmaduke," he said; "his melancholy, his cynicism, his gentleness all attracted me. I only wish I could still see him."

"Forgive, Godfrey," said aunt May. "If you only knew how forgiveness takes away the sting from injury!"

Aunt May looked very tired, and they left her. She drew Agnes to her, and gave her a motherly kiss, and then committed her to Wentworth's care, for it was late.

END OF VOL. I.

WORKS OF FICTION,

By Popular Authors,

PUBLISHED BY

SMITH, ELDER AND CO.

The Wortlebank Diary. By HOLME LEE, Author of "Against Wind and Tide," "Sylvan Holt's Daughter," &c. 3 vols.

Over the Cliffs. By Mrs. CHANTER, Author of "Ferny Combes." 2nd Edition. 2 vols.

Herbert Chauncey; a Man more Sinned against than Sinning. By SIR ARTHUR HALLAM ELTON, Bart. 3 vols.

A Mother's Trials. By the Author of "My Lady." 2 vols.

Against Wind and Tide. By HOLME LEE, Author of "Sylvan Holt's Daughter," "Kathie Brande," &c. 3 vols.

The Cousins' Courtship. By JOHN R. WISE. 2 vols.

Extremes. By MISS E. W. ATKINSON, Author of "Memoirs of the Queens of Prussia." 2 vols.

Greymore: a Story of Country Life. 3 vols.

Netley Hall; or, the Wife's Sister. Fcap 8vo, price 6*s.* cloth.

Cousin Stella. By the Author of "Violet Bank." 3 vols.

Confidences. By the Author of "Rita." 1 vol.

The Two Homes. By WILLIAM MATHEWS, Author of "The Heir of Vallis." 3 vols.

The Dennes of Daundelyonn. By MRS. CHARLES PROBY. 3 vols.

Trust for Trust. By A. J. BARROWCLIFFE, Author of "Amberhill." 3 vols.

Ellen Raymond; or, Ups and Downs. By MRS. VIDAL, Author of "Tales for the Bush," &c. 3 vols.

Lost and Won. By GEORGIANA M. CRAIK, Author of "Riverston." 1 vol. 2nd Edition.

An Old Debt. By FLORENCE DAWSON. 2 vols.

Sylvan Holt's Daughter. By HOLME LEE, Author of "Kathie Brande," &c. 2nd Edition. 3 vols.

My Lady: a Tale of Modern Life. 2 vols.

Eva Desmond; or, Mutation. 3 vols.

The Cruelest Wrong of all. By the Author of "Margaret; or, Prejudice at Home." 1 vol.

The Moors and the Fens. By F. G. TRAFFORD. 3 vols.

Gaston Bligh. By L. S. LAVENU. Author of "Erlesmere." 2 vols.

The Professor. By CURRER BELL. 2 vols.

Riverston. By GEORGIANA M. CRAIK. 3 vols.

Farina: a Legend of Cologne. By GEORGE MEREDITH. 1 vol.

After Dark. By WILKIE COLLINS, Author of "Basil," "Hide and Seek," &c. 2 vols.

The Roua Pass. By ERICK MACKENZIE. 3 vols.

The Noble Traytour. A CHRONICLE. 3 vols.

Kathie Brande: a Fireside History of a Quiet Life. By HOLME LEE. 2 vols.

Perversion; or, the Causes and Consequences of Infidelity. By the late Rev. W. J. CONYBEARE. 3 vols.

Friends of Bohemia; or, Phases of London Life. By E. M. WHITTY, Author of "The Governing Classes." 2 vols.

The Three Chances. By the Author of "The Fair Carew." 3 vols.

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.